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A GENERAL SKETCH OF  
EUROPEAN LITERATURE  
IN THE CENTURIES OF ROMANCE

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

THE THIRD GREAT WAR IN RELATION  
TO MODERN HISTORY. Bristol, Arrow-  
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A GENERAL SKETCH  
OF  
EUROPEAN LITERATURE  
IN THE CENTURIES OF ROMANCE

BY  
LAURIE MAGNUS

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1918





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TO THE SPIRIT OF FRANCE

*which quickens these leaves  
with eloquence not theirs*

‘Had I my way in the teaching of English literature, I would have the student start with a “General Sketch of European Literature,” somewhat resembling Mr. Freeman’s *General Sketch of European History* in its aim and scope and manner of treatment. . . . Such a “General Sketch of European Literature” I would fix once and for all, as an outline map, in the brain of the young student. . . . It is essential that he should know where were the headquarters of literature in each successive period. . . . When Boccaccio is spoken of in connection with Chaucer, when Tasso or Ariosto is spoken of in connection with Spenser, or Boileau in connection with Dryden or Pope, or Goethe in connection with Carlyle, he ought at least to be able to place Boccaccio and Tasso and Ariosto and Boileau and Goethe aright in the general movement of European literature, and in the same measure to conceive aright the relation of each to the literary movement in our own country.’

—E. DOWDEN.

‘Literature enables nations to understand one another.’—  
W. BAGEHOT.

## PREFACE

THIS book, though complete in itself, is intended to be the first of three volumes, telling the story of European literature from the twelfth century to the twentieth. A break, as legitimate as any in an uninterrupted consecution, is made here at 1637, the year of the foundation of the French Academy and of Richelieu's enrolment of Corneille. This limit is extended at one end to include the deaths of Milton and Calderon, and at the other to exclude the writers, starting with Malherbe, whose work contributed to the foundation of *l'Académie*. The succeeding volumes, which are partially prepared and now await more leisurely days, will deal with the epochs of *bon sens* and of romance revived respectively.

The collection of material has been the work of many years. I had hoped at first to write the book as a 'sketch' in one volume, thus conforming more closely with Prof. Dowden's design in the passage quoted on the opposite page. But Dowden's death in 1913, just before I was to have the advantage of consulting him on some chapters written to that scale <sup>1</sup>, caused me to lay the book temporarily aside; and, later, when I was revising the work on a rather more generous scale, military duties at home made the task of writing very slow. The present

<sup>1</sup> 'I shall be able to report with truth the impression of one who, like yourself, loves literature', he wrote to me on March 25, 1913.

instalment of the ' sketch ' is now published in the hope that Bagehot is right (the quotation faces this preface), and that a literary record of the centuries of old chivalry and new learning, when all Europe went to school together, may help a little to restore lost values and vanished ideals.

In a short study of a great subject, any elaborate bibliography would be pretentious. The main thing is, to read the men of letters, in their own languages, if the student can, and, if not, in the version which he finds easiest. My own resources are strictly limited, but I know two or three languages and can tap my way through two or three more; and, where an English translation is not available, a French or German serves in lieu. Some references to intermediate obligations will be found in the footnotes. For the rest, the student, if he desires it, will find no difficulty in collecting further books. There are excellent monographs in English on the history of the literature of the chief countries, such as Saintsbury or Lanson (French) for France, Ticknor or Fitzmaurice-Kelly (French) for Spain, J. G. Robertson for Germany, Maurice Baring for Russia, Symonds for the Renaissance in Italy, and an ample choice for England. There are a few comparative studies in English, such as Sir Sidney Lee's *French Renaissance in England* and Herford's *Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century*. Composite literary history should be sought in Hallam for the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, in Brandes (*Main Currents*, English translation) for the nineteenth century, and, generally, in chapters or paragraphs of the *Cambridge Modern History*, and in



‘ the new Hallam ’, as Prof. Saintsbury would have us call the twelve volumes of *Periods of European Literature*, which he edited and partly wrote. I should advise every student to learn almost by heart the *Harvard Lectures on the Revival of Learning*, by Sir John E. Sandys. The learned doctor’s more extensive *History of Classical Scholarship*, like Courthope’s *History of English Poetry*, Saintsbury’s *History of Criticism* and one or two other special studies, will be found better for reference than for reading. The student will be well advised, too, to make friends with the *Epic and Romance* and the *Essays on Medieval Literature* by Prof. W. P. Ker ; with *From Gerson to Grotius* by Dr. J. N. Figgis, a particularly fascinating volume ; with the *Foreign Debt of English Literature* by Dr. T. G. Tucker, of Melbourne, ornamented with ingenious diagrams ; with the Oxford lectures on *English Literature and the Classics* ; with recent studies of Erasmus and Rabelais ; and, if he can get hold of them, with some of the publications of the British Academy and the English Association. I omit French and German authorities : this catalogue *pas raisonné* is already leading me too far ; but I would make an exception of Faguet’s little *Initiation littéraire*. And I should like to be allowed to add a line of very grateful acknowledgment to the lifelong work of Prof. George Saintsbury in helping toilers in this field. His ubiquity is a constant surprise. Apart from his *opera majora*, including a *History of the French Novel*, now in course of appearance, he has written, edited, and caused to be written so many books that his authority is stamped on the whole subject. Even a trifle like his *First Book of English*

*Literature* (Macmillan, 1914), is informing and refreshing, and as full of meat as an egg.

I cannot close this list of obligations without thanking my wife for her constant encouragement and practical help.

L. M.

THE ATHENAEUM,  
PAUL MALL,  
LONDON, S.W.1.  
*March, 1918.*

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# A GENERAL SKETCH OF EUROPEAN LITERATURE IN THE CENTURIES OF ROMANCE

## CHAPTER I.

### Story-Matters and Story-Writers.

WHAT to write and How to write it are the two parts of the art of literature ; their harmonious fusion is the whole.

In the beginning, matter was scarce and style was crude and unadorned. A great leader's deeds in battle were the first and favourite subject, and the favourite manner of telling them was in short paragraphs of verse. There was no rhyme in early epic. Its effect was poorly represented, not by the blank-verse rhythm of later rhymeless epic poetry, but by a repetition of letters at the beginning, or of sounds at the end of words. The first of these devices is called *alliteration*, the second is called *assonance* ; and the latter is the commonest feature of primitive lays *de geste* <sup>1</sup>.

Narrative verse of this kind is found in most early literatures, and has a charm rather in excess of its actual qualities as poetry. It is old, and loyal, and pious ; it has a fresh sensibility to nature ; and it bears witness to the heroic character of the brave peoples who sang their leaders' fame. Thus, the English *Song of Maldon*, written in 991, when Ethelred the Unready was king, has the true epic ring

<sup>1</sup> Latin *gesta* (deeds), whence the French *geste* and English *jest*.

in certain passages ; notably in the dying speech of old Byrhtwold of Essex, who—

‘ shook his ashen spear, and taught courage to them that fought, saying : “ Thought shall be the harder, heart the keener, and mood shall be the more as our might lessens ” ’.

No leader of a forlorn hope would wish to be moved to finer utterance. Similar notes are heard in other poems, though none of them reached the level of the *Iliad* of the ancient master, whose works, so familiar to-day as a standard of comparison, were available then only in bad summaries or worse travesties. Still, hero-worship was not a monopoly of the Greeks, and the local heroes found their singers. Indeed, it may fairly be urged that the touches of Homer’s spirit in writers ignorant of Homer afford proof, to those competent to weigh evidence, of the dependence of style on matter.

## I. EAST AND WEST.

The heroic voice rang out in many places, even in some where it might least have been expected. One of these was Kiev, in South-East Russia, for centuries a nest of petty fighting along the waterways of commerce to Constantinople. Thither had come the hardy Norsemen in the far-away days, when ‘ piracy ’, we are told, ‘ was the exercise, the trade, the glory, and the virtue of the Scandinavian youth ’<sup>1</sup>. The piratical fighting round Kiev began in 862, when Rurik, a chieftain of Scandinavia, came roving from the North, seeking whom he might exploit. There he founded a dynasty, which lasted about seven hundred years ; and in its eighth generation the monotonous Chronicle of his line was broken by a

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. 55.

prose-poem, or lay, known in English as *The Armament of Igor*<sup>1</sup>, and embalming, in the words of a French critic, 'the promise of all the lyric poetry of Russia in the nineteenth century'<sup>2</sup>. It is a big claim for a lay of the twelfth century, when the poetic art was rudimentary and warriors' manners were rude; and how it happened that the anonymous epicist was touched to such rare expression, no one can say to-day. None ever can say how it happens that a seemingly inconspicuous *geste* should strike the imagination of contemporaries. We know a good story or a good song, but why we are privileged to know it is the secret of epicist and balladist, of the story-teller and song-writer. So it was with Igor at Kiev. When history has pieced together the fragmentary records of his career (1151-1202), he seems pathetic rather than heroic among the marauding chieftains of his race. He went out to battle, but he always failed, as was said of the Celts in olden times; and his foray of April, 1185, was no exception to the rule. Yet, though quite an insignificant episode in the Kiev cycle of desultory warfare, somebody saw its telling quality, and Igor's poet struck the authentic note. A national appeal always thrills. We change or adopt the current symbol, and realize the meaning in our own hearts; and, equally, heroic action touches universal sympathy. These chords were within Igor's compass, and the early Russian epic-teller knew how to add the revealing epithets, the natural magic, and the fighting-man's joy.

The later history of the *Armament* is interesting. The lay vanished for six centuries, and it was imprinted only just in time for a few copies of the *editio princeps* to escape the fire of Moscow in 1812,

<sup>1</sup> *The Tale of the Armament of Igor*. A.D. 1185. *A Russian Historical Epic*. Edited and translated by Leonard A. Magnus. (Philological Society.) Oxford.

<sup>2</sup> Vicomte E. M. de Vogué, *le Roman Russe*.

in which the MS perished. A second MS was discovered in 1864.

We pass to the other end of Europe. About fifty years earlier than the composition of *Igor*, a Spanish writer, likewise unnamed, composed a more notable epic poem on a more famous hero of Castile. *El Cid*, Lord Roderick, the Champion, was a very real personage in his day. He was named Ruy Diaz de Bivar, and men called him *Campeador*, or Champion, and *el Cid* (= *Sidi*), the Lord. The dates of his birth and death are 1040 and 1099. The Cid's lordship was over Valencia, which he besieged in 1092 and conquered in 1094. Thus, Lord Roderick's place in Castile is far more securely fixed than Prince Igor's in Kiev. But was it so much more eminent? History is partial on this subject. We note that Cervantes asked the question<sup>1</sup>, and we note, too, that Ruy Diaz was twice idealized by poets out of all likeness to the part he played on earth. First came this *Poema del Cid*, the anonymous Spanish epic of the twelfth century, and, next, in the seventeenth century, came Corneille's French drama, *le Cid*. The Castilian teller knew Roderick by repute, perhaps even had seen him personally. The French dramatist saw his tragic hero through the nimbus which veiled the Middle Ages, and neither presentment is probably the true Cid. Accordingly, we are to judge the Spanish version, with which we are immediately concerned, as poetry, not as history. It is history checked by art, and the art of epopee at that date had reached the height of its perfection. The rough edges of the hero were trimmed to the pattern of Christ's captain against the infidel. The noble savage was reformed into the ideal Spaniard. The fighting lord of Valencia became a symbol of the Divine Lord, and was embellished by his poet accordingly. Spiritual

<sup>1</sup> *Don Quixote*, i, 49.

and national aims, always congenial to the proud Spanish temper, were invoked to qualify and heighten the rude, soldierly virtues which Ruy Diaz displayed so valiantly ; and the *Cid* is unique as an example of a native hero invented by poetic skill, while his *geste* was still within memory.

Neither *Cid* nor *Igor* stood alone, and neither is complete as it stands <sup>1</sup>. Each has come down to us imperfect, as the survivor of and witness to others, less fortunate, if not less deserving. Thus, the Russian Chronicle of Nestor is even older than the *Igor* lay, and is still our chief authority for the coming of the Northmen to the East. Spain, too, had her chronicle-cycles, compiled during two or three centuries after the outstanding *Poema del Cid*. Apart from miscellaneous specimens, four such series are distinguished—

1. *Cronica General*, commonly known as *Primera* (the first); inaugurated between 1260 and 1268 by King Alfonso the Wise of Castile, whom we shall meet later on as the founder of Spanish law and constitution.
2. *Cronica General Segunda* (second), revised, with additions from *Primera*, in 1344.
3. A fresh revision, now not extant.
4. *Cronica General Tercera* (third); derived from No. 3, and dated from about the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Another offspring of No. 3 was the *Cronica de Castilla*, from which proceeded in turn a *Cronica particular del Cid*, first published in 1512 but composed in the previous century. To the same prolific fifteenth century belongs a very valuable compilation, known

<sup>1</sup> R. Southey (1774-1843) translated the *Cid* into English. *Igor* was the theme of an opera by Borodin (1834-87), the Russian composer.

as the 'Chronicle of his Most Serene Majesty King John the Second of Castile', who was a notable begetter of Spanish letters. His *Cronica* was printed in 1517, and was based on an historical sketch by Alvar Garcia de Santa Maria (died 1460), member of a well-known Jewish family of men of letters in Spain. Among single eminent examples of the chronicler's art, the famous *Passo Honroso* ('Pass of Honour'), the title of which suggests its contents, and the 'Oath of Tordesillas' may specially be selected for mention. But really the number is legion. The writing of *Cronicas* was practised right away into the sixteenth century, and it supplied endless material to the busy song-smiths, playwrights, and romancers, whose names enrich Spanish literature.

Meanwhile, in Europe, East and West, Russia's *Igor* and the Spanish *Cid* are available for common reading as typical specimens in the twelfth century of an art which was to prove so reproductive.

## II. CHARLEMAGNE.

The great clearing-house of the *geste*-works was France. Even the writer of the *Cid* is said on trustworthy evidence to have used a French model; and in the splendid history of epopee France was foremost in invention and adaptation.

The native French story-matter, like the Russian and the Spanish, was historical. Like them, it passed into legend on the lips of too loyal adherents; but behind all the tales of French *chansons*<sup>1</sup> is the figure of a king among men: ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν, Charlemagne.

Some kings achieve literature, others have literature thrust upon them. Charles, surnamed the Great

<sup>1</sup> The equivalent terms should be noted—

French, *Chanson*; Russian, *Bylina* (pl., *Byliny*); Spanish, *Cantar*; German, *Lied* (pl., *Lieder*); Icelandic, *Saga*.



(Carolus Magnus, Charlemagne), would seem to belong to both classes. When Pippin, his father, died, in 768, he left a comparatively small kingdom, which Charles extended by force of arms from the Danube to the Ebro and from the Elbe to the Po. Pope Leo III at Rome invested him with the Crown of the Frankish Empire, and 800, the year of that ceremony, ranks, accordingly, as the date of the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire <sup>1</sup>. Like King Alfred in our own country, the Emperor Charles encouraged the fine arts, and especially busied himself with a collection of old legends, associated with 'Germania' and the Rhine. By a fate not peculiar to medieval fathers, his son destroyed them as relics of barbarism. Like Alfred again, Charles invited scholars to his Court (the English deacon Alcuin among them), for the instruction and improvement of his people; and his use of monasteries and their inmates as the depositories and guardians of precious MSS was a further boon to literature, with wide results in future years, when Humanists ransacked these treasuries and Reformers uprooted them.

So much and more Charlemagne did, and all honour to his memory, as an active supporter of learning in the ninth century, A.D. His passive part in later centuries was even more important and effective. He strides through his *chansons de geste*, ripe in years, with long, flowing beard, the chieftain of doughty paladins, and a holy terror to the infidel. Gradually, as the legends grew, and each of the paladins of Charlemagne acquired his own legend-

<sup>1</sup> Its history has been told by Lord Bryce. It lasted one thousand and six years, and was evacuated at the beginning of last century by the Emperor Francis II, when Napoleon styled himself Emperor of the French. Francis II took the style of first Emperor of Austria, and was grand-uncle to the Emperor Francis Joseph, who died in 1916. The title of German Emperor (new series) was first assumed by King William I of Prussia after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870.

cycle, the central figure of the Emperor was subordinated to the figures of his knights. 'His beard and his credulity grew long together'<sup>1</sup>, wrote the first Italian romance-epicist, and the touch of contempt is characteristic of the monarch's place in his own legend. It was the old man who went down to history: the old king suspicious of his courtiers, the old father jealous of his sons, the old leader mumbling his past triumphs<sup>2</sup>. Noble, the Lion, king of beasts, deceived by the nimble wit of Reynard, was the form in which fable and satire presented Charlemagne in romance. But, though they reduced his true stature, the story-writers knew their business. Literally, it suited their book to contract the leader's scope. It left the stage free for his paladins. By exchanging one hero for many, they acquired the dramatic motive of an empire parted among its heirs.

The first of these heirs in romance was Roland, nephew of Charlemagne. Historically, Hruotland, or Roland, was Warden of the Breton marches, and he was killed in 778 at the head of a rearguard action against Basque hillsmen at Roncesvalles in Northern Spain. Except for the makers of epopee, this bare statement of facts would be more than enough to commemorate a little episode of obscure fighting long ago. But Roland, like Igor and Roderick, and like Arthur, to whom we shall come, was greater in fiction than in fact. For this disaster to Charlemagne's lieutenant appealed to popular imagination, and the romancers' art was set to work to adorn Roland for their tales. They took him out of his narrow surroundings. They promoted the Basques to Saracens, traditional foemen of the Cross, thus raising Roland at a stroke to the rank of a Christian hero.

<sup>1</sup> Pulci, *Morgante Maggiore*.

<sup>2</sup> The personal history of Charlemagne was confused with the decline of his dynasty.



They changed the modest *ruse-de-guerre* by which Hruotland had been cut off in the defile into a base act of treachery by a Frankish accomplice of the Saracens. They invented Ganelon (or Ganilo) as villain of the plot, and represented him in one version as stepfather to his victim. They set Oliver, the Wise, by the side of Roland, *le preux*, and enhanced, or invented, the fair Aude, Oliver's sister and Roland's lover. And when the battle had been lost, and the tragedy was done, and the clear, clean blade of Durendal, Roland's invincible sword, had pierced its last Pagan, and Roland, on the summit of a peak, had turned his eyes towards Spain, and had stretched to God his gauntleted right hand, and the Angels of Heaven had encompassed him about, then the poets invented the reprisals. The third part of the *Chanson de Roland* narrates Charlemagne's vengeance on the Saracens, and his slaying of their leader in single combat. So this tale of a skirmish at Roncesvalles, where 'the mountains were oh! so high, and the valleys oh! so deep, and the torrents oh! so swift', was embellished by French romance into the immortal story of Sir Roland, who fought the good fight for God and France, as gallant Frenchmen have fought it to this day—

'Jamais le comte Roland n'aima les lâches,  
Ni les orgueilleux, ni les méchants,  
Ni les chevaliers qui ne sont pas bons vassaux' <sup>1</sup>.

Always he sought the thickest of the fray—

'Ah! si vous aviez vu Roland jeter un mort sur un autre mort,  
Et le sang tout clair inondant le sol!  
Roland est rouge de sang; rouge est son haubert, rouges sont  
ses bras,  
Rouges sont ses épaules et le cou de son cheval'.

<sup>1</sup> From the modern French version of *La Chanson de Roland*. . .  
Par Léon Gautier. 17th edit., 1888.

And always he chose the honourable part, as became  
a paladin of 'sweet France'—

'C'est ici, c'est ici que nous serons martyrs.  
Maintenant, je sais bien que nous n'avons plus longtemps à vivre ;  
Mais maudit celui que ne se vendra chèrement !  
Disputez bien votre mort, votre vie,  
Et surtout que France la douce ne soit pas déshonorée.  
Quand Charles mon seigneur viendra sur le champ de bataille,  
Quand il verra le massacre des Sarrasins,  
Quand pour un des nôtres il en trouvera quinze d'entre eux parmi  
les morts,  
L'empereur ne pourra pas ne point nous bénir'.

The success of the poem was immediate and enduring. No *chanson de geste* has thrilled larger audiences than *Roland*. Roland and Oliver have become a proverb. Roland's war-song is said to have been chanted by Taillefer, the fighting herald, at the Battle of Hastings, 1066. *Roland* supplied the model for *el Cid* ; and Roland, naturalized as Orlando, will be found in later chapters of this book as the chief figure in the Carlovingian romances of Italian poets, including Ariosto.

Of course, there was another side to his story ; the Spanish side of the victors, that is to say. But the honours of romance are with the French, and the tales and ballads of the valorous Spaniard, Don Hernando del Carpio, who slew 'Roldan', the invader, are no better authenticated than Roland's *chanson*, and have enjoyed less fame.

A second great Carlovingian story was that of Huon of Bordeaux. The emperor of this tale is a patriarch, at last entering his dotage. At the age of a hundred and twenty-five years he is still busy with affairs of State, and is induced to believe a false charge brought against Huon by his enemies. He condemns the unhappy knight to expiate his crime in Babylon, and Huon takes ship for the East. Here the poet's genius displays itself. Brindisi, from which Huon sets sail, became a port of embarkation into wonder-

land, and the knight quits the known world for realms of Oriental magic. Oberon, king of the fairies, enters literature by this gate, set wide by early French romancers to Shakespearean fancy and imagination.

We cannot traverse all the Charlemagne-cycle. French scholarship, working on the remains, enumerates four main groups—

1. National or royal *chansons*, including the Emperor's Saxon campaign, his fabled expedition against the Saracens, the *Enfances* (early exploits) of Ogier the Dane, and Charlemagne's visit to Palestine. This last is mainly in burlesque.
2. Feudal *chansons*, including *Huon de Bordeaux*.
3. Biographical *chansons*, with genealogies, etc., affording later romancers ample scope for topical references and local colour; and
4. Adventitious *chansons*, derived from sources outside the main repertory.

Summarily, this mass of romances took shape between 1050 and 1350. The tales were composed at first to a simple musical accompaniment. The singer or reciter was the *jongleur*, the inventor or retriever was the *trouvère* (troubadour), and he retrove from various sources. Chiefly, of course, he took them down from the lips of guardians of tombs and of sacred relics in the churches, where a constant stream of pilgrims evoked then, as ever, loquacious guides. The *jongleur's* well-paid business was to collect as many *chansons* as he could, and to recite them at any resort where he could ply his trade. He might deal with his repertory as he chose. There was no copyright to be considered, and a clever *jongleur* would be careful to polish and embellish his wares, without spending money in renewing them. Thus, the contents of the *chansons* departed further and further

from verisimilitude. Adventure and romance were accumulated, and even the form was modified in the competition for popular applause. The four- or five-foot iambic line, arranged in blocks (French, *laisses* or *tirades*) of verses, spread to the twelve-foot Alexandrine. The *laisses* were broken into stanzas; vowel-assonance was varied with rhyme, and the disuse of the lyre or harp led on the one part to more elaborate versification and on the other to a beginning of prose-narration.

These technical features of composition, which practice constantly improved, are common to all the romances derived by early French writers from the mass of local epic-cycles, and we repass from the manner to the matters. The native *matière de France* was supplied by Charlemagne; and second only, if second, in importance, was the so-called *matière de Bretagne*, hewn from the Breton legends of

### III. ARTHUR.

*Flos regum Arthurus*, King Arthur of the Welsh<sup>1</sup> hills, is even more remote than Charlemagne from the uses of history and biography. He is reputed a leader of the Britons in their struggle during the fifth century against Teuton invaders; and, while the first account of this warfare comes from the pen of Gildas, a clerk, who lived shortly after the events, the first mention of Arthur by name occurs in the tenth century in the course of a Latin book by Nennius, who extolled him as victor in twelve battles. Celtic poetry and fairy-tales set to work on these slender traditions, and some fragmentary prose-tales in Welsh, known as *Mabinogion*, and dating, probably, from the thirteenth century, survive as eloquent

<sup>1</sup> The French name for Wales is *Galles* (Gaul). Hence one branch of the Arthur-cycle is known as *Amadis of Gaul*. See p. 16.

witnesses to the growth of the Arthur-story. But it had become a legend, and nothing more. As Matthew Arnold said in *Celtic Literature*: 'The medieval story-teller is pillaging an antiquity of which he does not fully possess the secret'.

So we part from King Arthur in the flesh. Like Don Roderick and Count Roland, he is lost in the wreaths of his own mists, and, haply, he inspired another Welshman to save us anew from the invader. 'I will not say it shall be so', it is written of Arthur's return, 'but rather I will say, Here in this world he changed his life'<sup>1</sup>. King Arthur of fiction took his place, and it happened in the course of the centuries that the three most exquisite versions of the tales of his first coming were inscribed by three Englishmen: Thomas Malory, Edmund Spenser, and Alfred Tennyson. Before the tales reached Malory, however, in his *Morte Darthur* of 1469, many rich additions had been made, chiefly by Latin and French writers, to the primitive narrative of Gildas the clerk. Even Malory himself, by the testimony of his printer, William Caxton, took his copy 'out of certain books of French and reduced it into English'; an anticipation of the *entente cordiale*, which we meet again in the age of Ronsard.

We may distinguish three main stages in the gradual development of the Arthuriad from the fifth to the fifteenth century. First, Celtic magic overlaid it with the wild and melancholy charm which haunts the genius of the race. Next, our Angevin kings, for the aggrandisement of their own dynasty, employed political historians (the type has not been unknown in later days) to trace the descent of King Arthur from Aeneas of Troy, and so infuse Roman blood in British kings. Brut (Brutus) was discovered as the great-grandson of Aeneas, and the name Britain was

<sup>1</sup> From Malory, *Morte Darthur*.

derived from him. This mission was faithfully discharged by the Latin histories of Geoffrey of Monmouth (c. 1136); and, professing to draw from native sources, which he omitted to specify, Geoffrey introduced Merlin, or Myrrdhin, a famous wizard of old Wales, as the prophet of Arthur's birth and death. The sin of Modred with Guenevere, Arthur's mortal wound in his last battle, his departure to Avalon and his return, were all handed on for elaboration to the eager romancers who came after. Other tales, too, of early Britain, Shakespeare's *Lear* and *Cymbeline* among them, would have meant less to us, or nothing, save for Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin book. Thus, the glamour of Celtic magic and the glory of Roman descent were both added to Arthur in the Middle Ages. The third and greatest was still wanting: his consecration to the Cross; and this, too, was a boon of the twelfth century.

It came in a curious way, characteristic of the uncritical times. In the accepted story of Britain's conversion to Christianity, Joseph of Arimathea had exhibited on a round table the grail<sup>1</sup>, or dish, in which he had caught the falling drops of the Saviour's blood. In the tale of Peredur (Perceval) in the *Mabinogion*, we read of a grail, or dish, which that valiant knight had to find in order to break an enchanter's spell. An Anglo-French writer called Wace was the first to seize this opportunity. His *Brut* of 1155 was a clever poetic revision of Geoffrey's history of British kings, and he enhanced the splendour of the dynasty by annexing for Arthur's knights the Table Round of the sacred legend, never afterwards separated from the story. Next, in a series of three tales, *Joseph of Arimathea*, *Merlin*, and *Perceval*, Robert de Boron, a French romancer, represented the

<sup>1</sup> Old French, *graal*. The etymology is unknown. Better known is the later confusion between *San Greal* (= holy dish) and *Sang Real* (= true blood).



two grails as one, and identified the Celtic talisman with the Christian relic of the Cross. Thus, the Quest of the Grail was raised out of the region of Pagan magic into an emblem of Christian faith and a symbol of knightly valour. Lancelot and Galahad in turn took Perceval's place as Grail-hero. Tristan, lover of Isolt, and Lohengrin, Knight of the Swan, were assimilated to the main stock ; and an immense mass of *romans Bretons* avenged the disappearance of the Celtic kingdom by conquering the imagination of all Europe.

We need not follow any further the 'French books' read by Malory for the copy which Caxton imprinted, and in which, as he said, 'may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after the good', he added, 'and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renommee'. There were those in after times (Roger Ascham, Queen Elizabeth's tutor, was among them), for whose taste these tales of the Arthuriad were too full of 'war and wantonness', in the epithets used by Tennyson, to be admitted as moral reading. The reproach would not be unjust, if the king and his knights could be divested of all the magic and the virtue which poets and romancers have bestowed on them during more than fourteen hundred years. But the poetry cannot be unsung, the romances cannot be untold. 'Amongst us Englishmen', as Caxton wrote, Arthur is 'most to be remembered before all other Christian kings'; and to us, as to Spenser, he still presents 'the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve moral virtues'. He is still the warrior-prince, whose epic Milton meditated before he wrote *Paradise Lost*; and still, his name,

'A ghost

Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain-peak,  
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech',

as in the last lines of the *Idylls of the King*.

There is nothing to add to these praises of the old tales, preserved in early centuries by Anglo-French chroniclers and poets. But if any question their high judgments, or share the schoolmaster's doubt, let him open Malory's *Morte Darthur*, and turn first to book xviii, chapter 25, which tells us of young love in May—

‘ And thus it passed on from Candlemas till after Easter, and the month of May was come, when every lusty heart beginneth to blossom and to bring forth fruit ; for like as herbs and trees bring forth fruit and flourish in May, in like wise every lusty heart, that is in any manner a lover, springeth and flourisheth in lusty deeds. For it giveth unto all lovers courage, that lusty month of May, in some thing to constrain him to some manner of thing, more in that month than in any other month, for divers causes. For then all herbs and trees renew a man and woman, and in like wise lovers call again to their mind old gentleness and old service. . . . Therefore, like as May month flowereth and flourisheth in many gardens, so in like wise let every man of worship flourish his heart in this world, first unto God, and next unto the joy of them that he promised his faith unto. For there was never worshipful man nor worshipful woman, but they loved one better than another : and worship in arms may never be foiled ; but first reserve the honour to God, and secondly the quarrel must come of thy lady : and such love I call virtuous love ’.

And the burden of proof is upon him who says otherwise.

Before leaving Arthur and the Arthuriad, mention is due to a branch of his many-branching story known as *Amadis of Gaul* (Gaula, Wales). Its hero came from the same hills whence the *romans Bretons*



descended, and passed through the same romantic treatment. But at an early date he was adopted in Spain and Portugal, and there his adventures entertained King Francis I of France during the campaigns of the sixteenth century. By royal command they were rendered into French, thus returning after many years to the country of their first adoption. The success of Amadis at his second coming belongs to a later chapter of French literature, and we shall reach it in due course. Here we have only to remark the derivation of the tale from the Arthur-cycle.

Caxton's fine preface to Malory names nine pre-eminent heroes: three Christians, three Jews, and three Pagans; and he joined to Charlemagne and Arthur the name of Godfrey of Boulogne (Bouillon) as the third in the first class. To Godfrey, too, we return in a later chapter, for Tasso, the great Italian poet, retold his romantic story in *Jerusalem Delivered*, and drew material for this epic-romance from many an older tale, right away back to the twelfth century. Antioch, again, like Jerusalem, was a Holy City of romance for valiant knights of chivalry who set sail from Brindisi for the East <sup>1</sup>. It would be an endless task, however, to enumerate severally by name the romantic sites and heroes of old-time story and song. We may quote a memorable couplet by Jean Bodel, a French *trouvère*, who admirably classified the common repertory in three groups—

‘ Ne sont que trois matières a nul homme entendant,—  
De France, et de Bretagne, et de Rome la Grant ’.

The matter of France was Charlemagne, the matter of Bretagne was Arthur. What was the matter of great Rome? We may call it, summarily,

<sup>1</sup> The epithet *Flos regum Arthurus*, which Tennyson prefixed to his *Idylls of the King*, first occurs in an epic romance on the Siege of Antioch, by Joseph of Exeter (twelfth century).

## IV. ANTIQUITY.

Jean Bodel called it 'Rome', because the thirteenth century, in which he wrote, lived under the sign of the Roman Church; and the name of Rome is preserved in the *romans* which it inspired. But the chief hero of the *matière de Rome*, its Charlemagne or Arthur, so to say, was not a Roman, but a Greek: Alexander the Great of Macedon. Not the Alexander known in Greek history, diligently proved and documented, but a marvellous, magical Alexander, a hero of glamorous adventures in the land of the rising sun. The conqueror of all the known world who still sought new worlds to conquer, and died, unglutted of conquest, at an age when most men start their career, appealed irresistibly to the imagination of the chivalrous knights of the Middle Ages, who were always seeking a new grail, unaware of the secret of modern faith, that the Quest and the Grail are one. And this wonder-king of French *chansons* was not derived from sober Greek historians. The main source of the story-tellers was a Greek book composed at Alexandria in the second century, A.D., by a writer unkindly known as pseudo-Kallisthenes, and his narrative, we must admit, was as unveracious as his name. A Latin version was compiled from it in the fourth century, epitomized again in the ninth, and it was this epitome which inspired the first *chanson de geste* of Alexander, written by Alberic de Besançon. So far removed from reality was Besançon's picture of the Macedonian, that he was represented as a feudal monarch, surrounded by barons and knights. Next came the *roman d'Alisaundre*, some time towards the close of the twelfth century, and its authors used as metre an elongated verse of twelve syllables, famous ever after as the Alexandrine. Thus, the last of Alexander's conquests was the national measure of French verse.

Among these poets of the Alexandriad, three are mentioned by name : Lambert le Tort de Châteaudun, Alexandre de Bernay de Paris, and Pierre de St. Cloud. They used as additional source-books Alexander's reputed correspondence with Aristotle, the philosopher, and Dindimus, King of the Brahmins, and likewise an *Iter Paradisæ* of Alexander's sojourn in Paradise. The conqueror's Indian campaign was the topic of a further romance by Jacques de Longuyon (c. 1312), and there we first meet the nine notables, three Christians, three Jews, and three Pagans, so popular in after-literature.

Alexander did not exhaust Antiquity. The siege of Troy and its episodes were too close to the sympathy of besiegers of Antioch and Jerusalem to fail to find modern romancers ; and there was further the foible of Western monarchs to trace their descent from Trojan chieftains. The ' descendants ' of Brutus and Aeneas were concerned for their ancestors' renown. But here, too, true authorities were missing. Homer, as we saw, was unavailable, and these fervid national story-tellers had to retrieve their history of Troy from two source-books of the sixth century, ascribed to ' Dictys ' and ' Dares ', who, with admirable impartiality, had espoused respectively the Greek and the Trojan sides. We may skip the development of these chronicles. The Trojan tale acquired European interest when a French clerk, Bénéoit de Ste. More (Ste. More was not far from Tours) wrote a *roman de Troie* in more than thirty thousand verses. Its date was c. 1160, and it was dedicated to Queen Eleanor, consort to Louis VII. Bénéoit's tale was characteristic of its kind. He conformed the Greek setting to modern manners. Calchas appeared as a Christian bishop, and Hector was beloved by a fay. Next came a Sicilian redaction by Guido delle Colonne, and Gower, Boccaccio,

Chaucer, and Lydgate all followed Guido to Troy. A *Recuyell* (Collection) of the *Historyes of Troye* was the first book imprinted in England by William Caxton, 1474.

Of the tale of Troilus and Criseyde, which Chaucer inscribed to 'moral Gower', and in which he had 'for successors all the dramatists and novelists of all the modern tongues'<sup>1</sup>, including Shakespeare himself, there is no need to speak. It had been told by Dares and Dictys, it was retold by Bénéoit de Ste.-More; Guido took it from Bénéoit, and Boccaccio and Chaucer handed it on. Troilus was the son of Priam, King of Troy, and his 'matter', as Chaucer calls it, is perhaps the most moving of all matters which romance took from Antiquity—

' In which ye may the double sorwes hear,  
Of Troilus, in loving of Criseyde,  
And how that she forsooke him er she deyde '.

Thebes, too, yielded its riches, not less romantic than Troy's, and chief of the Theban matters was the love-tale of Palamon and Arcite, retold by Boccaccio in his *Téséide*, by Chaucer in his *Knight's Tale*, and, later, in the *Two Noble Kinsmen*, 1634, of John Fletcher, in which Shakespeare may have collaborated.

Another popular love-tale was that of Flores (Florio, Floire) and Blanche fleur (Biancafiore), which Boccaccio related in his *Filocolo*. A charming variant of it is found in a French romance, *Aucassin et Nicolette*, which was written in the twelfth century, and which Andrew Lang rendered into English in the nineteenth. Since it is told partly in verse and partly in prose, it is called a *cantefable*, or song-story, and as story or song it is equally fresh and delicate—

' 'Tis how two young lovers met,  
Aucassin and Nicolette,  
Of the pains the lover bore  
And the sorrows he outwore,  
For the goodness and the grace  
Of his love, so fair of face.

<sup>1</sup> W. P. Ker, *Essays on Medieval Literature*.

' Sweet the song, the story sweet,  
There is no man hearkens it,  
No man living 'neath the sun,  
So outwearied, so fordome,  
Sick and woful, worn and sad,  
But is healèd, but is glad  
'Tis so sweet '.

Not unlike *Aucassin* is *Flamenca*, dating from the mid-thirteenth century, and interesting, too, for its list (verses 609-701) of the source-books of medieval romance.

We must not linger at these fountains. It is no diminishment of the originality of Boccaccio and Chaucer, and of the earlier romancers whom they drew upon, to refer to the *Thebais* of Statius, a Latin poet of the first century, A.D., as the prime authority for the tales of Thebes. Traces, too, of the influence of Greek novelists, Longus, Heliodorus, and others, are found in *Aucassin* and other tales, and these traces became more prominent at the time of the *Amadis* revival. But of all the source-books of the matter of 'Rome la grant', or, as we prefer to describe it, Antiquity, the fullest and the most abiding was Ovid; Publius Ovidius Naso, who died A.D. 17. Through Ovid's poems, more than through any medium, the gods and heroes of old Greek myth found their way into modern verse, and the way was made wonderfully smooth by the inimitable grace of his Latinity. Ovid's ruling deity was Cupid; to Love as master and magician, and to the sway of Love over men and women, all his skill and talent were devoted. His *Ars amatoria* was ransacked for the code of medieval courts-of-love, and dictated the laws of chivalry and the manners of the Table Round. His *Heroides* and his *Metamorphoses* ('a sort of Bible of antique Paganism'<sup>1</sup>) were at the same time pumped dry for story-matter. His tales of Pyramus and Thisbe, of

<sup>1</sup> W. S. Lilly, in the *Fortnightly Review*, Jan., 1917.

Dido, Medea, Orpheus, Ariadne, Philomela, Narcissus, became part of the common stock of romance. Dante was so much impressed by them, that, with true twilight timidity, he called for an allegorical interpretation, and this was presently forthcoming in a French anonymous poem, which explained the theological significance of each Ovidian tale to the patient intellect of the fourteenth century. A second 'moral Ovid' was written in Latin by Pierre Bersuire, translator of Livy's histories, who died in 1362. In mine host's 'words to the company' which introduce Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*, we are assured that Chaucer

'Hath told of lovers up and down  
More than Ovid made of mention',

and a long list is given of the English poet's debts to the Roman.

'Trans ego tellurem, trans altis audiar undas',

(across the land, across the deep seas my name shall be heard), wrote Ovid of himself, in one of those moments of individualism which appealed so strongly to Renaissance scholars. The prophecy is just. His fame flew in every country, and the signal example of Shakespeare may be cited as summary proof. Arthur Golding's *Metamorphoses*, 1565-67, and Turberville's *Heroides*, 1567, were both well known to him, and his *Rape of Lucrece*<sup>1</sup> is cited, among other presumptive evidence, to prove his acquaintance with the Latin text. Truly might Francis Meres write, 1598: 'The sweet, witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare'.

<sup>1</sup> From Ovid, *Fasti*, ii, then not yet translated.



## V. SOME OF THE WRITERS.

We have examined, briefly enough, the three story-matters of Western literature, of France, of Bretagne, and of 'Rome': Charlemagne, Arthur, and Antiquity. Before we look further north and further south, we shall mention, no less briefly, a few of the major writers who piloted the themes through the Middle Ages.

Chief of those who have survived the perils of time and anonymity is Chrétien de Troyes, of the second half of the twelfth century. He was a clever and prolific *trouvère* at the court of the Countess Marie de Champagne, daughter of King Louis VII and Queen Eleanor of France. He translated the *Ars amatoria*, to which we referred just now, as an essential handbook of method; but in effect he was a Celtic revivalist, in whose hands the Celtic legends were reborn. It was the business of the craftsmen of this age to romanticize the old heroic tales. They rendered them to sophisticated audiences, trained in the chivalric tradition. The old wine was poured into new bottles, shaped—the shaping was the thing—according to the pattern of Ovid and other love-professors. *Ego sum preceptor amoris*, the Roman master had said, and medieval romancers delighted to make his precepts real. So, Arthur emerged from his Welsh hills as a peer in chivalry with Charlemagne. So, Charlemagne laid away his rudeness, and gave noble laws to Christian paladins. So, Alexander of Macedon was furnished with a feudal retinue; and so, as we saw, the gates of faery were set wide to travellers eastward-ho! This was Chrétien's method with his 'matters', in *Percival* and other great romances; and, if a little of the Celtic magic was spilled in his tales of Norman chivalry, if the process completed by Tennyson was begun by his long-ago

predecessor, still the work was set in forward lines. The very labour of transfusion helped French literature to develop, and to transmit to other tongues, its always characteristic qualities of grace, deftness, and lucidity.

A second famous romancer was Marie de France, 1154-89. Her Breton *lais* were dedicated in England to King Henry II, who had married Queen Eleanor, the widow of Chrétien's Louis VII of France. Beyond her name and her lays and her familiarity with the neighbourhood of Rouen, little personal is known of her. She wrote an *Ysopet* (Little Æsop) as well as contributions to the Arthuriad. Chrétien and Marie together helped to inspire a Spanish romance, the *Cavallero Cifar*, or 'History of the Knight of God called Cifar', which was written at Toledo about 1290. It is particularly interesting for its invention of the *pícaro*, or rogue, as a romantic hero, extended in many directions by later novelists in Spain.

Next in merit to the French inventors were the German continuators of these tales. Indeed, their talents were so admirable as to constitute almost a new beginning. Wolfram von Eschenbach, for example, whose dates have been roughly fixed at 1170 to 1220, was a poor knight of Bavaria, who enjoyed the princely patronage of Count Hermann of Thuringia. It is said that he could neither read nor write, but somehow he had a wide acquaintance with the epic recitals of his day, and was among the first of his countrymen to appreciate Chrétien de Troyes. Wolfram's Arthurian *Parzival*, on which we should like to dwell, displayed one feature pre-eminently which characterizes German literature throughout. He delineated a struggle in the soul, thus raising to spiritual planes the old conflict of heroic action. Percival's *Twifel* (= Doubt <sup>1</sup>) is defeated by *Saelde*

<sup>1</sup> Modern German, *Zweifel*.



(= Blessedness <sup>1</sup>), and the indication of this inner tumult makes noble numbers of the chivalric Court-epos.

Gottfried von Strassburg, who flourished at the same period, is often contrasted with Wolfram as representing a decline of the chivalric ideal from the summit to which Wolfram had raised it. But if Gottfried was less deeply imbued with a sense of the permanence of knightly virtue, he surpassed his contemporaries in tuneful devotion to what Tennyson has called 'the maiden passion for a maid'. The *Minne* of Teuton love-lyrists (the exact meaning of *Minne* is mindful-love, whether of man for woman or of humanity for God) has never been delineated more purely than in the *Tristan* of 1210, by which Gottfried enriched the *Arthuriad*—

' 'Twas love alone that set the theme :  
A lover and a lover's dream ;  
A man, a woman : woman, man ;  
Tristan—Isold : Isold—Tristan ! '

Hartmann von Aue (c. 1170-c. 1215), a Swabian by birth, was poet and Crusader. Like Wolfram, he was an early disciple of Chrétien de Troyes, and his *Erec* and *Iwein* showed traces of the debt.

More notably, Hartmann went to the archives of his feudal lord at Aue for the subject of his finest romance, *Der arme Heinrich* ('Poor Henry'). Tradition told of a Heinrich von Aue, who had the misfortune to be struck with leprosy, and who was only to be cured of his disease by the voluntary sacrifice of a maiden willing to marry him. Out of this dramatic motive the court-poet wove a moving tale, duly rewarded, doubtless, by his patron. Longfellow, the American poet, deemed the legend 'to surpass all others in beauty and significance', and retold it in his *Golden Legend*, 1851. It may be added

<sup>1</sup> *Seligkeit*.

that Heinrich's epic-idyll was the first of the class of poems which culminated in Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*.

The fourth of these great contemporaries and in many respects the greatest was Walther von der Vogelweide (c. 1170-1228). He learned his craft from Reimar von Hagenau (c. 1160-1210). Prof. Saintsbury, who is never dithyrambic, has described Walther as 'the mouthpiece of the half-inarticulate, all-suggesting music that is at once the very soul and the inseparable garment of romance'. His own countrymen have compared him with Petrarch, and the comparison, though not fully apt, is valid in at least one particular. Both poets brought to bear on common life a fresh, bright power of observation, and a keen sense of human sympathy. Of Walther's biography little definite is known; he spent some years in travel, meeting Wolfram in Thuringia and residing for some time in Vienna. His fame rests on his love-verse, or Minnesong, and, though Uhland generously declared that 'Minnesong sprang in the valleys of Provence, the child of love and spring', its Southern origin should not disguise the fact that in certain aspects of beauty the Teuton poets surpassed the Provençal. To the literature of Provence we come at the close of the present chapter. Here we may note that the Minnesinger introduced a more spiritual note into the sensuous lyric of Southern France. Partly, the difference is climatic; there was less open-air love-making in the North, less serenading under the moon, and, consequently, more reflection. There was less jealousy in Minnesong; less brave colours, perhaps, but a fuller heart. Minnesong died very quickly, but it numbered hundreds of practitioners, drawn chiefly from the knightly caste, and of these Walther was the foremost. He was known to his countrymen as the Nightingale, but his own

sweet-sounding name of Bird's-meadow (*Vogelweide*) suggests even more directly the pure, true, flute-like strain which he poured into Europe's choir of voices.

The sounds are so remote from current speech that quotation and illustration are not easy. A typical maxim may be cited, which contains the Minnesinger's whole creed—

‘ Swer quotes wibes minne hât,  
Der schämt sich aller missetât ’—

‘ He that hath a good woman's love is ashamed of every misdeed ’. And we may try to render the words and spirit of a few lines of Walther's song in spring-tide, of which echoes are heard adown the ages—

‘ When the flowerets from the grass are springing,  
Just as if they laugh'd up to the sun,  
On an early morning in the May,  
And the little birds begin their singing  
At the best that ever they have done,  
How delicious may our life be ! Nay,  
'Tis very half of Heaven ’.

But ‘ love and spring ’ made songs everywhere in that age. English lyric at the same date, both secular and sacred, hardly fell below the *Gottesminne* and *Frauenminne* (love of God and love of women) of Teuton example. Two brief specimens may be selected from a collection made c. 1310, and preserved in a MS known as Harlcian 2253. They will be familiar by later imitation. (1) The following refrain occurs in a love-song—

‘ Blow, northern wind,  
Send thou me my sweeting :  
Blow, northern wind,  
Blow, blow, blow ’,

and (2) the following verse inspired one of Tennyson's later lyrics—

‘ Summer is y-comen in, loudë sing cuckoo !  
Groweth seed and bloweth mead and springeth the woodë now,  
Sing cuckoo ! ’

The ‘ smale foulë ’, or the ‘ litel foulë ’, or the ‘ glad

foulé', carols through all these Mayings, and marks the birth-time of poets' wonder.

Lastly, in this section, we observe that in other countries, as in Spain, the chroniclers marched with the romancers. We saw how English historians, in their books of kings' deeds (*de gestis regum*), traced back the Angevin dynasty through Arthur to Aeneas. Thus, Robert of Gloucester, towards the close of the thirteenth century, completed such a verse-chronicle of English history, which, though possibly not homogeneous in authorship, marks an interesting development in language, metre, and treatment. In its earlier portions, from 'Brutus' to the Conquest, through King Lear, King Arthur, and other heroes, the chronicler relies on his predecessors, of whom Geoffrey of Monmouth was the chief. In the later passages of the story the value and the originality increase. The descriptions of the town-and-gown riot at Oxford in 1263, of the battle of Evesham, and the death of Simon de Montfort are recognized as masterly and authoritative.

A greater name is that of Matthew Paris, who died in 1259, and whose office of chronicler to the monastery of St. Albans afforded him welcome opportunities of learning the history which he wrote from the lips of eminent visitors to the shrine. Paris's *Chronica Majora*, or annals of his own time, extend from 1235 to the year of his death, and their value as contemporary evidence to occurrences and opinions is enhanced by the brightness of the style. Paris enjoyed royal favour, and was sent on a mission to King Hacon of Norway, whose name we shall meet in the last section of the present chapter.

In Denmark, Saxo the Grammarian (c. 1150-1206), who was Latin Secretary to the Archbishop of Lund, wrote a *Danorum Regum Heroumque Historia* in Latin hexameter verses, likewise partly inspired by the

histories of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Saxo's work has two great moments of interest to English literature. First, it narrates the tales of the old Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf* (a short Odyssey of adventure on the Northern mainland which was the cradle of our race); and, secondly, it tells the story of the Prince of Denmark immortalized in *Hamlet*. Saxo's history was imprinted at Copenhagen, 1514, under the scholarly care of Pedersen, and Anders Vedel, the philologist, translated it into Danish, 1579.

The foremost French chronicler of this age, and contemporary with Saxo, was Geoffroi de Villehardouin, who died in 1213, after a full and interesting life. He took part in the diplomacy which preceded the Fourth Crusade, and he was present at the capture of Constantinople. Villehardouin dictated his memoirs, 1207-12, and it is this work of the evening of a busy life which is now known as *la Conquête de Constantinople*. A *chanson de geste* in prose, the prose-instrument raises it to history; and as history written by a statesman it is a document of first-rate importance in the development of that art. Villehardouin's statecraft was governed by the idea of feudal honour. Any offence against that code ranked as an anti-social act. But he shared Chrétien's taste for adventure-description for its own sake, and his sense of method and design, his brief and pithy characterizations, and his even balance and reserve of judgment entitle him to the fame of the earliest prose-historian of France.

Nearer the close of the thirteenth century, the Sire de Joinville (1224-1317) wrote in prose a soldier's life of King Louis IX of France (St. Louis, the knightly crusader) whose religious biography was written by Geoffroi de Beaulieu, a Dominican. De Joinville's memoir, which has recently been rendered into

English <sup>1</sup>, is an extraordinarily vivid and convincing account of what he 'saw and heard during the six years' that he accompanied Louis on his pilgrimage and after their return. There are some delightful touches in it too. King Louis loved his people so well that he enjoined upon his son—

'I would rather that a Scot should come out of Scotland and rule the people of the Kingdom well and justly, than that thou shouldst govern them ill'.

And he loved truth so much 'that he would not play even the Saracens false': 'as hereafter you shall hear', adds de Joinville, with the genuine touch of the practised story-teller.

## VI. GERMANIA.

We go back from the makers to the matters, and turn next to a consideration of the books collected by the Emperor Charlemagne, and destroyed, as we saw, by his son.

What was this legendary lore which the Frankish king, who was himself to become a legend, sought to gather for his people? It was a mixture of old songs and tales, derived from a remote pagan past, and clinging, like wreaths of river-mist, to the Danube and the Rhine. The German word for mist is *Nebel*, and these lays of the Teuton mist-dwellers were ultimately woven into the romance of the *Nibelungenlied*. The reputed author is an Austrian poet whose date is fixed between 1190 and 1220. Properly, there are two parts to his poem. The older is the Fate (*Not*) of the Nibelungs, and the later is their Lament (*Klage*), consisting of about two thousand lines. The

<sup>1</sup> By Ethel Wedgwood. Murray, 1906.



**Fate** is written in four-line strophes of eight-syllable verses, rhymed in pairs, with a metrical pause (*cæsura*) in each verse. The Lament moves more rapidly to the sound of the survivors' grief at the tragedy which overtook their heroic race.

We are not to look for history in the *Nibelungenlied*. 'The great historical names which appear in the old German heroic poetry are seldom found there in anything like their historical character, and not once in their chief historical aspect as adversaries of the Roman Empire. In the main, the story of the Nibelungs is independent of history, in respect of its matter; in its meaning and effect as a poetical story it is absolutely free from history'<sup>1</sup>. Thus, it differs constructively from such poems as the *Cid* or *Roland* or the *chansons* which were to make the *Morte Darthur*. Remote as these were from the facts on which their romance was founded, they preserved at least a verisimilitude. The *Nibelungenlied* is pure romance. Its folk-lore of wood and river is overlaid with the manners of Norman chivalry, which is not always quite fully reconciled with the primitive passions of Huns, Burgundians, and Franks. Jealousy, love, and hate are the governing motives of the story, and both parts of the epic are dominated by Kriemhild, the Burgundian princess of Worms. Her first husband is Siegfried, son of a Netherlander king, and the resources of myth and chivalry are exhausted to idealize their marriage. But it comes to a violent end. The Siegfried-tragedy takes its appointed course, and the Nibelung-tragedy comes after it. Thirteen years after Siegfried's death, his widow is wedded to Etzel, or Attila, King of the Huns. But Attila's dark-browed wife, deeply brooding on revenge, is awfully changed from the romantic maiden whom Siegfried took to his heart; and the poet touches Homeric

<sup>1</sup> W. P. Ker, *Epic and Romance*.

heights when he relates with terror and pathos the scenes of Kriemhild's vengeance. Discrepancies and obscurities there are in plenty in this poem, but its singleness of purpose raises it far above the lays and songs out of which it was composed, and which Charlemagne had diligently collected. The South German poet succeeded in an eminent degree in preserving for seven hundred years (witness Richard Wagner) the fascination of the old themes. He incorporated all that went before him in the matter known as 'Germania': the lay of *Hildebrand*, armourer to Theodoric, valorous King of the East Goths, *Beowulf* of the Northern mainland, *Maldon* of our own coasts, and similar heroic poems in rhymeless alliterative metres from the outlying lands and islands within the sphere of Teutonic speech. In the national sentiment of Germany, the *Nibelungenlied* fills the place which the *Iliad* filled for the Greeks. They see in it their faith in faith (*Treue*), their destiny, their courage, their desire; and it has passed into the life-blood of the people to whom it primarily belongs.

The minor romance of *Gudrun*, likewise South German by authorship, was composed c. 1200. *Gudrun's* story belongs to Scandinavia, to which we immediately come, and her tale, 'twice wedded, widowed, and wooed of Kiartan', is retold in *The Earthly Paradise* by William Morris. Like the greater lay in the same cycle, it is crammed full of love and fighting.

## VII. THE SAGAS.

*Gudrun* brings us direct to the *saga*-literature of Iceland, whose merchant-venturers, we saw, came roving to Kiev in the ninth century. While descendants of Rurik the Norseman were inspiring song and



chronicle in Russia, the hardy race from which he sprang was living the heroic life at home.

*Saga* means simply story, and the golden age of the *sagas* lasted roughly from 1100 to 1300, unless we date their decline more precisely at 1263, shortly after Matthew Paris's embassy, when Iceland submitted to Norway, and passed into centuries of silence.

We are to distinguish two groups of *sagas*: (1) the mythological, and (2) the historical. The first, founded on the matter of 'Germania', which we have just examined, consists mainly of five stories—

- (a) *Njåla*, the story of Burnt Njal. This has been translated into English by Sir George Webbe Dasent, editor of the *Norse Fairy Tales*.
- (b) *Laxdæla*, the dwellers in Laxdale. This is the basis of Morris's 'The Lovers of Gudrun'.
- (c) *Eyrbyggja*, and
- (d) *Egla*, the story of Egil. These two were retold by Sir Walter Scott.
- (e) *Grettla*, the story of Grettir. This has been translated into English by Morris and Magnusson.

We shall not discuss this group, which is known chiefly in modern versions; nor shall we anticipate here the deliberate Icelandic revival by Macpherson, Percy, and Gray in the eighteenth century in England; by Tegner and, later, by Ibsen in Scandinavia. Through these or similar channels of the renewal of 'Germania' in modern Europe, readers ignorant of the originals have been familiarized almost in their nurseries with the Viking of romantic literature. He is mainly a literary product, and how far his familiar figure corresponds with his prototype in early Iceland is a question of comparative manners which does not

affect his charm. The foreign influences encouraged by King Hacon (1217-63) led at an early date to sophistication, and it has even shrewdly been suspected that the Viking had begun to be artificial before he ceased to be genuine.

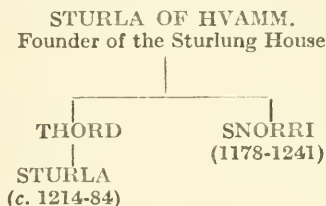
Passing to the historical group of *sagas*, we are arrested at once by Hacon's name. The king's death (1263) marks the close of Icelandic history. With Iceland's submission to Norway, the 'Kings' Lives' in Icelandic letters came to an end. We are not concerned with the causes why Iceland submitted, nor with her chief poet's share in the diplomacy of the events which he narrated in his *sagas*. We are not even overmuch concerned with the miniature renaissance at King Hacon's court, which gave a welcome, as we saw, to Matthew Paris, King Henry III's ambassador from England, and which contaminated the pure wells of *saga*-literature with the Ovidian love-lore of Chrétien de Troyes. History and criticism must settle the exact bearing of these considerations. Our business is to make acquaintance with a very few leading Icelanders and with at most two Norse kings, and our whole interest is centred on the years 1067 to 1263.

The two kings of Norway who concern us are Sverre, who died in 1202, and Hacon, his grandson.

The first of the eminent Icelanders is Ari Thorgilsson, 1067-1148; the rest are members of the Sturlung family. This family has been compared with that of the Douglas in Scotland, which threw up Gavin Douglas, the poet, among its fighters and barons. Or they may be compared with the Medici in Florence, whose blood still flows in royal veins. The characterization of a Romanes lecturer will fit either house, whether the Icelandic in the thirteenth or the Italian in the sixteenth century—

This family was one of the most ambitious, and did as much as any to spoil the old balance of the Commonwealth. The strange thing about them is that, with all their dangerous, showy qualities, they provided some of the finest literature<sup>1</sup>.

The Sturlung tree is as follows—



Our 'Who's Who' is now complete for the second great group of Icelandic *sagas*, founded on history, not myth, and written in prose, not verse. The history was that of the Norse kings to the death of Hacon in 1263; the prose was that of the fighting writers who took part in the tales which they told. Snorri's part, indeed, has been described as very much less noble than his prose; and his assassination in 1241 at the hands of his own son-in-law, and possibly by the instigation of King Hacon, may have been the fate of his intrigues at the Norwegian court.

The known works in this group are five—

- (a) *Life of King Sverre*, dictated by the royal adventurer to an abbot.
- (b) Ari Thorgilsson's *Lives of the Kings of Norway*; now lost.
- (c) The *Heimskringla*, containing an abridgement of Snorri's new *Lives of the Kings of Norway*, more or less founded on Ari's.
- (d) Sturla's *Sturlunga Saga*.
- (e) Sturla's *Life of King Hacon*.

<sup>1</sup> W. P. Ker, *Sturla the Historian*. Oxford, 1906.

It will be observed that Sturla was Snorri's nephew, and he wrote his uncle's life.

Next, taking these *sagas* in order—

(a) King Sverre was an early exponent of the doctrine, later so famous and so fatal, of the Divine right of kings. He commended the doctrine in a pious testament, and he exemplified it in his adventurous lifetime by the terror of a band of warriors, who were known locally as *Birkibeiner* (birch-legs), in reference to their greaves of birchen bark.

(b) Ari's *Lives*, as noted, are not extant. Critics differ considerably as to the use which Snorri made of them in the *Lives* contained in an abridgement in the *Heimskringla*. The point is not very important at this date, and we may be content to conclude, with the high authority of Vigfusson and York Powell, 'that Ari was the author of the first draft of the *Kings' Lives* down to Magnus Bareleg, and that Snorri Sturluson re-edited this work, putting into dramatic form, with great beauty, pathos, and humour, those stories which have made the *Heimskringla* so justly famous' <sup>1</sup>.

(c) Snorri's work, whether wholly or partly his own, is a fine piece of heroic prose, glowing with zest of adventure and life, and full of moving incidents by sea and land. One episode at least, the last sea-fight of King Olaf, is of a piece with the story of Grenville and the Revenge, as told by Sir Walter Raleigh in the sixteenth century.

(d) and (e), Sturla's great *sagas*, close the line, and with them closes the history of the free Commonwealth of Iceland. The national fight for independence was the family history of the Sturlungs, and the

<sup>1</sup> The chief English authorities are *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* and *Sturlunga Saga*, both edited at Oxford by G. Vigfusson and F. York Powell. Prof. Ker's writings are mentioned in previous notes with grateful appreciation.

*Sturlunga Saga* relates with extraordinary vividness the events of those fateful years. National, even local, in its setting, despite the many points of contact between Iceland and other countries, free Iceland speaks to us still out of these annals of her fighting chiefs, and bespeaks universal sympathy for the heroic past which they enshrine. Sturla's lifetime, it will be observed, coincided with that of the Sire de Joinville, who wrote the life of King Louis IX of France. But there is a remarkable contrast, as has been often pointed out, between de Joinville's *Vie de Louis* and Sturla's *Hakonarsaga*. The French book is subjective, partial, and filled with the author's personality. The Icelandic book aims at and achieves almost a passive objectivity. The *saga*-style imposed its own conditions, and epic writers of the Norse kings' lives, or of the lives of the heroic Icelanders who opposed them, fulfilled those conditions till the end. With their passing, the mind of Iceland ceased to be vocal among the nations. With their passing, the floodgates were opened to the invasion of foreign romance-models, and the softer tones of *rimur*, or rhymed chronicles, succeeded to the stately *saga*-prose.

Ari and Snorri were both writers of other books than those mentioned above. The taste and piety of Hauk Erlendsson, a book-lover of the fourteenth century, preserved Ari's *Landnámabók*, which is a history of the Norse settlement in Iceland, and has, accordingly, exceptional interest for students of what may be called the national and psychological forces behind the fighting and diplomacy of the Sturlung period. This work, first printed in 1688, has been appropriately characterized as 'a Domesday-book turned into literature'.

More general interest attaches to the *Edda* <sup>1</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Edited by Prof. A. C. Brodeur. New York and Oxford, 1916. My quotations are from the translation in this edition.

known as the *Prose Edda*. Its author was the same Snorri Sturluson who wrote the *Kings' Lives* contained in the *Heimskringla*. Whatever Snorri's faults as a man, and even more as a statesman, his *Edda* has lived for nearly seven hundred years to prove his surpassing skill as an instructor of poets. Before considering the book as a work of literature, we have first to clear away the rubble which has gathered round its name. What *Edda* means we do not know : it is probably 'Earth' (or 'Mother'), in the sense in which George Meredith used that term ; and *Edda* may be no more than a reasonably fanciful name for a book on Icelandic poetic origins, or the mother-wit of Icelandic poetry. Rather more probably, however, critics incline to the following view. A certain Saemund, surnamed the Wise, had a school in the latter part of the twelfth century at a certain place called Oddi. Saemund either wrote, or he did not write, a collection of old Icelandic poems ; at any rate, the book was in his library, which Snorri frequented in his boyhood. This book, located at Oddi, would be known as the *Edda* or *Odda bok* ; and when Snorri paraphrased its contents in Part I of his poetics and quoted copiously from the *Odda bok*, he called his own work the *prose-Edda*, as distinct from the poetic-*Edda*. It may be. Bishop Brynjolf (1605-75) argued from Snorri's *Edda* to an older poetic *Edda* behind it, and supported the view of Saemund's authorship ; and this theory suited scholars' hopes in the years of the Norse renaissance<sup>1</sup>. We must leave the critics' problem where we find it. On one point all are agreed : it is an immense convenience to describe Snorri's book as the Younger or *Prose Edda*, and to refer to the *corpus* of Icelandic poetry on which

<sup>1</sup> The *Codex Regius* of Snorri's *Edda* was discovered by Brynjolf in 1642, and was sent by him from Iceland to Denmark, where it is housed in the King's Library at Copenhagen.



he obviously depended as the Elder or Poetic *Edda*. These names, accordingly, we retain.

The Younger *Edda* consists of three Parts---

1. A dialogue, examining the old myths. It is herein that the Elder *Edda* was so freely used.
2. 'The Poesy of Skalds'; a handbook to poetic words and phrases.
3. A treatise on metres, taught by examples, with a running commentary. There is also a Prologue, which takes shape as an introduction to Scandinavian mythology.

Thus, Snorri's book, from start to finish, is a guide or handbook for the poets of the age, 'a text-book for apprentice poets', as it has been called; and its charm and value are immensely increased by the rational, ironic tone which Snorri introduced into his treatise. The style, or, rather, the attitude, which Snorri adopted in his *Edda* may be judged by one of the passages in Part II, 'The Poesy of Skalds'. Snorri is suggesting to young poets the various periphrases which they may use in place of a god's actual name, which might grow monotonous by repetition. Thus, Freyja, he says, may be called—

' Daughter of Njördr, Sister of Freyr, Wife of Odr,  
Mother of Hnoss, Possessor of the Slain, Goddess  
Beautiful in Tears ',

and so forth. All the goddesses, he remarks,

' may be periphrased thus : by calling them by the  
name of another, and naming them in terms of their  
possessions or their works or their kindred '.

We recall from Elizabethan poetry the lines (1641)  
to Mary Countess of Pembroke—

' Underneath this sable hearse  
Lies the subject of all verse,  
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother '.



‘ Sister of Freyr, Mother of Hnoss ’. The great artificers beekon across the centuries.

But Snorri was not content with saying *how* repetition might be avoided ; he would also explain the *why*. Thus, he tells us—

‘ Idunn is also called Spoil of the Giant Thjazi, according to the tale that has been told before, how he took her away from the Æsir. Thjódólfur of Hvin composed verses after that tale in the *Haustlöng* ’.

And then he quotes for our delight about a hundred lines from the *Haustlöng*, derived, no doubt, from that Elder Poetic *Edda* which the seventeenth century yearned to find.

A dozen of the elder skalds are drawn upon for periphrases of Heaven, in order to prove a poetic patent for ‘ Wain’s Road ’, ‘ Winds’ Wide Basin ’, ‘ Ruler of the World-Tent ’, etc. ; and Earth, Sea, Sun, the Seasons, Man, Woman, and the rest are similarly treated. So—

‘ Woman should be periphrased with reference to all female garments, gold and jewels, ale or wine or any other drink, or to that which she dispenses or gives ; likewise with reference to ale-vessels, and to all those things which it becomes her to perform or to give. It is correct to periphrase her thus : by calling her giver or user of that of which she partakes <sup>1</sup>. But the words for “ giver ” and “ user ” are also names of trees ; therefore woman is called in metaphorical speech by all feminine tree-names. Woman is periphrased with reference to jewels or agates for this reason : in heathen times what was called a “ stone-necklace ”, which they wore about the neck, was a part of a woman’s

<sup>1</sup> Lady ( = loaf-giver ) will be recalled.

apparel. Now it is used figuratively in such a way as to periphrase woman with stones and all names of stones. Woman is also metaphorically called by the names of the Ásynjur or the Valkyrs or Norns or women of supernatural kind. It is also correct to periphrase woman in terms of all her conduct or property or family '.

We like to imagine the young skalds of the thirteenth century in Iceland weighing the relative values of the poetic figures and devices, displayed with such profusion of examples by the romantic warrior-statesman of the fighting family of the Sturlungs.

### VIII. PROVENÇAL SONG.

We turn from the agitated, isolated North to the warm, communicative South. The stories of Provence were written in song ; and here, again, in the dawn of modern history, a few definitions are necessary.

We are to distinguish, for example, between *Langue d'oc* and *Langue d'oïl*, and to recall that France in the twelfth century was divided into two parts, with the river Loire as dividing-line. North of that line were the people who wrote *oïl* (Latin, *illud*) for 'yes' ; south of it were the Languedocians, who wrote *oc* (Latin, *hoc*) <sup>1</sup>. The *Langue d'oïl* was French proper ; *français* had gradually swallowed the weaker dialects of the North. It was soon to swallow the Southern, too ; but meanwhile, for a brief, sweet flowering-time, the Limousin dialect of Provence made a literary language for itself. In that land of sunshine and song, with its Moorish affinities of blood,

<sup>1</sup> Dante, in his treatise *de Vulgari Eloquentia*, called Italian the *langue de 'si'*, and discussed the literary precedence of the three languages, thus differentiated.

its natural buoyancy and blithesomeness, and its receptive and fertile genius, Provençal literature grew up and was cut off before the spirit of the Renaissance was breathed into the common life of Europe. Many factors conspired to produce it : the sun, the scenery, the Moors, chivalry, Ovid, light-heartedness, wandering scholars from the North, a sense of freedom which was cruelly punished, and an innate instinct for music and form. The outcome was a burst of love-lyric which still makes the Troubadour of Provence a synonym for passion and romance. Passion, indeed, is the key-word. The conditions of society in Southern France enthroned the Madonna in the home. Love and worship were equal parts of love. Every Court was a synod of song-birds ; the singers danced to the songs which they sang ; and still the songs which they danced to are filled with Provençal sunshine, as a shell with the sea.

The patriarch of the Troubadours was Count William IX of Poitiers, Duke of Aquitaine (1086-1127). Among his troubadouring descendants were Eleanor, his granddaughter, wife of Louis VII of France and afterwards of Henry II of England ; Eleanor's daughter, Marie of Champagne, and Marie's son, King Richard Cœur-de-Lion. In the same melodious company were monarchs as distant as Frederick Barbarossa in Germany and Alfonso II in Aragon. The royal lead was naturally contagious, and nearly five hundred Troubadours in all the higher ranks of life can even now be counted by name. The best known is Bertrand de Born (c. 1140-c. 1215), whom Dante sent to hell for his busy political mischief. 'Modern writers', we are told, 'go to the other extreme, and see in him the incarnation of French patriotism and the forerunner of Joan of Arc'<sup>1</sup>. It is his poetry, not his politics, which matters, and

<sup>1</sup> H. J. Chaytor, *The Troubadours of Dante*.

Bertrand's songs and odes are among the greatest of their kind. It was Bertrand who fastened on Cœur-de-Lion the famous name of Richard Yea-and-Nay (*Oc e No*)—

‘ And tell the Lord of Yes and No  
That Peace already has been too long ’.

Another Provençal Troubadour was Robert Browning's Sordello, who died about 1269. Yet neither Dante nor Browning did more to characterize Provençal poetry than Tennyson effected in six lines of his *Idylls of the King*—

‘ I knew  
Of no more subtle master under heaven,  
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,  
Not only to keep down the base in man,  
But teach high thought, and amiable words,  
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,  
And love of truth, and all that makes a man ’.

The English laureate of the nineteenth century went straight back to Provence in the twelfth and thirteenth for the idea which informs these verses.

The music vibrates in men's memory, but why did the sweet voices die ? There was a town on the Tarn called Albi, a little east of Toulouse, which is famous in literary history as a stronghold of heresy. What form this heresy took, and why it was known as Manichean, and how it travelled to the South on the lips of Abelard's disciples, are matters pertaining to the history of Church and free-thought rather than to literature proper. What we know is, that the Albigeois (or Albigenses, inhabitants of Albi) helped to spread the heretical doctrine through Toulouse and Provence, and that in 1207 Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse, suffered sentence of excommunication by Pope Innocent III. Next year a Crusade was preached against him, and it stands on record that the Pope, ‘ in extending the benefits of a Crusade to Christians fighting against Christians, handed on a precedent which was soon fatally abused by his

successors ' <sup>1</sup>. To the victims of the Albigensian Crusade this distinction of precedence was immaterial. Their lot was the horror of persecution. They knew that their days were numbered, and that King Philip Augustus of Northern France was waiting stealthily at the gate till events should have set it open for him. A Frenchman, Simon de Montfort, replaced Raymond as Count of Toulouse, 1213, and Raymond's son was glad to retain the empty title of Marquis of Provence. A few years later, de Montfort's successes paved the way for Philip Augustus, and before the king's death in 1223 the North had conquered the South, and *Langue d'oïl* had ousted *Langue d'oc*. So perished the heretics of Albi. But with them Pope Innocent exterminated the indigenous culture of Provence. Literally, exterminated it, or drove it beyond the borders of Languedoc.

Provençal literature might linger in *el gai saber* (' the gay science ') of courts-of-love, in Floral Games at Toulouse and Barcelona, and right away on to Mistral in the nineteenth century. But its true life was not in its decline. Fire and sword had destroyed it, and its abiding influence was communicated, not by formal practitioners and fitful revivalists, but by those who preserved the scattered seeds and brought them to flower: in France proper, Sicily, Tuscany, Germany, Spain, England. The Minnesinger were Troubadours all. Dante, love of Beatrice, was a sublimated Troubadour. Petrarch continued the tradition. Chaucer brought it to our shores. Ronsard renewed it in France, Boscan and Garcilasso in Spain, Wyatt and Surrey in Tudor England. This brief springtide of Provence, though none write in *Langue d'oc* to-day, is a spring of everlasting passion in the poetry of every tongue in Europe. Every lover in May is a Provençal Troubadour at heart.

<sup>1</sup> T. F. Tout, *The Empire and the Papacy*.

## CHAPTER II.

### The Age of Dante.

BERTRAND DE BORN, as we saw, was committed by Dante to hell.

‘ The beautiful Spring delights me well,  
When flowers and leaves are growing ;  
And it pleases my heart to hear the swell  
Of the birds’ sweet chorus, flowing  
In the echoing wood ;  
And I love to see, all scatter’d around,  
Pavilions and tents on the martial ground ;  
And my spirit finds it good  
To see, on the level plains beyond,  
Gay knights and steeds caparison’d ’.

So wrote de Born in his pride, and so wrote, or tried to write, many scores of the fighting Troubadours, whose poetic ichor flowed in Dante’s veins. Yet Dante, parcelling hell into deep trenches of narrow circles of torment, placed de Born in the ninth trench of the eighth circle—

‘ I truly saw, and still I seem to see it,  
A trunk without a head walk in like manner  
As walked the other of the mournful herd.  
And by the hair it held the head dissevered,  
Hung from the hand in fashion of a lantern,  
And that upon us gazed and said “ O me ! ”  
It of itself made to itself a lamp,  
And they were two in one, and one in two ;  
How that can be, He knows who so ordains it.  
When it was come close to the bridge’s foot,  
It lifted high its arm with all the head,  
To bring more closely unto us its words,  
Which were : “ Behold now the sore penalty,



Thou who dost breathing go the dead beholding ;  
 Behold if any be as great as this.  
 And so that thou may carry news of me,  
 Know that Bertran de Born am I, the same  
 Who gave to the Young King the evil comfort " ' 1.

Why, we ask, was this harsh and headless fate reserved by Dante for de Born ? A complete answer is not possible. Dante's *Inferno* was peopled according to a mandate of his own, and no present-day court of inquiry can investigate all the considerations, personal, historical, and political, which weighed with Dante in his lifetime. But a clue may be sought in the last verse. De Born gave the ' young king ' (Henry, twice crowned during the reign of his father, King Henry II of England) evil counsel, and the evil counsellors of princes were doubly damned in Dante's eyes. They practised ' machinations and covert ways ', and injured both the princes and their peoples. So the poet, however brilliant a Troubadour, who encouraged mischief in the State and sowed seeds of political dissension, was tried, convicted, and sentenced by the last and greatest of the Troubadours. For ' the spirit of the age is changing ', writes a close and an accurate observer. ' Never before have we had so many poets to satirize the stains upon the garment of humanity, which does not necessarily prove that the stains are deeper, but certainly suggests that the poets are more moral ' 2.

There at present we must leave this matter. The ' more moral ' tone of Dante's age will appear from an examination of its products, when something, too, will be said of Dante's dark historical background.

<sup>1</sup> Dante, *Inferno*, XXVIII, 118-35. The translation is Longfellow's, and I use it throughout this chapter. As indicated below, Longfellow misses the effect of Dante's rhymes. The *terza-rima*, or linked triplets, of the original is rhymed as follows : *aba, bcb, cdc, ded, efe, fgf*, and so on. But Longfellow is spirited and fairly literal.

<sup>2</sup> E. Dale, *National Life and Character in the Mirror of Early English Literature*.



## I. LOVE-LYRIC.

First, of the *forms* of verse, which were cultivated intensively by love-lyrists. The stanza just quoted from de Born occurs in a poem of a kind known to the Troubadours as a *sirvente*. Literally, a 'song of service', it passed into French as *serventois* and into Italian as *serventese* or *sermintese*. The service might be to God or man, and didactic poets used this lyric form for moral or social themes. It played a conspicuous part in popularizing the Crusades, and, later, satirists employed it with a sting directed against women. Dante tells us in *Vita Nuova* that he had 'put together the names of sixty of the most beautiful ladies in that city where God had placed my own lady, and these names I introduced into an epistle in the form of a *sirvente*'. Villon's *Ballade des Dames du Temps Jadis* was a *sirvente*, as we shall see, of the fifteenth century, and Tennyson's *Palace of Art* may be said to have revived the kind in the nineteenth.

Another form of Troubadour poetry was the *retroencha* (*rotrouenge*), or song with refrain, such as Richard Cœur-de-Lion sang from the casement of his German prison. There were, further, the *alba* (*aubade*), or morning-farewell, and the *serena*, or evening-farewell; the *balada*, *pastorela*, *canso*, and *planh* (lament); the *rondeau* and *rondel*, the *vireli* and *villanelle*, and many others. The Provençal *tençon*, or lovers' dispute, became the *jeu parti* of France, and was also known as *débat* or *estриф* (strife). This kind is important to later literature, apart from the attraction of its specimens, on account of the stimulus which it gave to dramatic composition. Akin to the *débat* was the *pastourelle*, probably Northern French in origin, which treated the encounter of a

knight with a shepherdess and his success or otherwise in wooing her. Since the lady commonly had a husband, the dramatic interest was ready made.

De Born wrote a *planh* for the 'young king', who died in 1183, and a favourable specimen of the *débat* is found in *The Owl and the Nightingale*, an anonymous English poem, written *c.* 1220. The *débat* had two interlocutors. When Wiclif added a third person, he called the resulting poem a trialogue, by a confusion between dialogue and duologue.

Some writers, too, may be enumerated. They are not major names, perhaps, but where so much has been lost or forgotten, and where our debt to the beginners is so immense, relative degrees of greatness are difficult to estimate in perspective. Thus, the Court of Thibaut IV (1201-1253), Count of Champagne and King of Navarre, was a mission-station for Troubadour poetry in its journey outwards from Provence. Its next resting-place was Sicily, and thence it crossed to the Italian mainland. The period of its passage across the straits is described as its Tuscanization (*Toscanaggiamento*), and the earliest Tuscan love-lyrist was Guido Guinicelli of Bologna (*c.* 1230-1276). Dante acknowledged Guido as 'father of me and of my betters', and attributed to him a 'sweet, new style' (*dolce stil nuovo*) in lyric songs, which would 'make for ever dear their very ink'. The sweetness was in places a little cloying, and its newness mainly consisted in applying Plato's theory of ideas to the conception of human love. Through one man's love for one woman, the lover was wrought upon to seek the mystic 'idea' of love, whose pattern was laid up in Heaven. This not very easy quest of love sublimated and woman spiritualized was sung by Guido and his successors in a style sweet enough but far from simple: Guido's ode of *the*

*Gentle Heart*, in D. G. Rossetti's version, is often quoted—

' The sun strikes full upon the mud all day :  
 It remains vile, nor the sun's worth is less.  
 " By race I am gentle," the proud man doth say ;  
 He is the mud, the sun is gentleness.  
 Let no man predicate  
 That aught the name of gentleness should have,  
 Even in a king's estate,  
 Except the heart there be a gentle man's.  
 The star-beam lights the wave,—  
 Heaven holds the star and the star's radiance '.

This stanza enfolds, as in a cradle, the future gentleman of the Renaissance.

To Guido Guinicelli succeeded Guido Cavalcanti (1255-1300)—

' So has one Guido from the other taken  
 The glory of our tongue, and he perchance  
 Is born, who from the nest shall chase them both ',

wrote Dante of the two Guidos, and no one disputes to-day Dante's superiority in Tuscan song to his friends and immediate predecessors. With him and them we associate a philosophic vision of love, which, though rare in expression, persisted from age to age. Founded on love of mortal woman, it released itself more and more from a bondage to the flesh, and gradually was more and more attuned to purely intellectual perceptions. Shelley's *Epipsychidion*, written in 1821, and described by Addington Symonds as ' the most unintelligible of all his poems to those who have not assimilated the spirit of Plato's *Symposium* and Dante's *Vita Nuova* ', is the chief modern link in the lyric chain which goes back to Dante and the Guidos, and, through them, to Sicily and Provence. To Dante's contributions we shall return. Here we may note an impression which Shelley did not fail to mark, that language itself is

too gross for the impalpable essence of this kind of poesy—

‘ Woe is me !  
The winged words on which my soul would pierce  
Into the height of Love’s rare Universe,  
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire ’.

A type of the simpler lyric poets, who continued the note of the Troubadours in the Italian tongue, and handed on models for imitation to Petrarch and his followers, was Cino of Pistoja (c. 1270-1337). He, too, was Dante’s friend, but the greater poet did not seduce him into the rare cult of the *dolce stil nuovo*. Cino was content to be intelligible, even at the expense of the ideal ; and in a sonnet, translated by Rossetti, he admits his failure as a Dantesque lover—

‘ Dante, since I from my own native place  
In heavy exile have turned wanderer,  
Far distant from the purest joy which e’er  
Had issued from the Fount of joy and grace,  
I have gone weeping through the world’s dull space,  
And me proud Death, as one too mean, doth spare ;  
Yet meeting Love, Death’s neighbour, I declare  
That still his arrows hold my heart in chase.  
Nor from his pitiless aim can I get free,  
Nor from the hope which comforts my weak will,  
Though no true aid exists which I could share.  
One pleasure ever binds and looses me ;  
That so, by one same Beauty lured, I still  
Delight in many women here and there ’.

## II. THE SCHOOLMEN.

Morality is largely a teacher’s matter, and the ‘ more moral ’ tone discerned by critics in Dante’s age is, partly, at least, to be sought in the philosophic doctrine of the schools. Here we note, at the outset, that the hand of ecclesiasticism lay heavily upon them. The tide of education had ebbed from the monasteries which Charlemagne founded in pleasant

rural surroundings, and younger universities began to cluster round cathedral-schools in big cities. Thus, Salerno, Montpellier, Bologna, Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, Padua, Salamanca, Toulouse, all date from the beginning of the thirteenth century. Pisa, Florence, Perugia, and others, and Prague, the first German university, rose in the fourteenth; and all these early seats of learning had 'fundamentally an ecclesiastical type'<sup>1</sup>. Differences in degree of course there were, according to the closeness of the control; and, later, as we shall see, such differences led to important cleavages at the Reformation. But generally, and particularly at the outset, intellectual freedom was almost unknown, and the entrenchment in the forecourts of the universities of settlements by the great religious Orders was a further obstruction to the light.

Here, too, though the disputations of theologians are of little present value to literature, we must differentiate degrees. Among the religious Orders the Franciscans (founded at Assisi, 1220) were less rigidly orthodox, we are told, than the Dominicans, founded five years earlier at Toulouse, and this fact, too, had its influence on the Reformation in Germany. But Franciscans and Dominicans alike, when once their Orders had been founded, filled the ranks of scholastic philosophy; and, as the well-understood function of medieval Schoolmen was to reproduce 'ancient philosophy under the control of ecclesiastical doctrine'<sup>2</sup>, or to make Aristotle a prophet of the Roman church, the dead hand was an ever-present burden.

Scholasticism, as a system of thought, existed before the Schoolmen. The first impulse was lent to it by Boethius, a philosopher-martyr of the sixth century. To modern readers Boethius is known for

<sup>1</sup> Ullmann, *Reformers Before the Reformation*.

<sup>2</sup> Sir J. E. Sandys, *History of Classical Scholarship*.

the charm of his Latin poetic dialogue on 'The Consolation of Philosophy'. It was translated into every tongue; into English by King Alfred, and Geoffrey Chaucer, and Queen Elizabeth, among others. It consoled Sir Thomas More in the Tower of London, as it had consoled its author in his confinement in the Tower of Pavia. Gibbon called it a 'golden volume not unworthy of the leisure of Plato', and described Boethius in stately words as 'the last of the Romans whom Cato or Tully could have acknowledged for their countryman'. So fares Boethius in modern eyes. To medieval Schoolmen, however, he wore the garb of another character. He was Aristotle's translator and commentator. He begat the interminable duel between Nominalists and Realists, which vexed with such dire ingenuity the learning of succeeding generations; and 'from martyrdom and banishment' Dante (in *Paradiso*, X) exalted Boethius to the fourth of his ten heavens.

Further we need not follow him. Nor shall we pause at the doctrine of 'Dionysius the Areopagite', who enumerated for Dante and the mystics the order of the heavenly hierarchy. The distant music of those spheres helped Milton to forget his blindness, and it is for Dante's sake and Milton's that the memory of these doctors is worth disturbing. For Dante, the latest and greatest of medieval writers, 'thought and reasoned in the terms and assumptions of scholastic philosophy' <sup>1</sup>.

So we come to the mighty lights of the thirteenth century: the Franciscans—Alexander of Hales (died 1245), Robert Grosseteste (died 1253), Bonaventura (died 1274); the Dominicans—Vincent de Beauvais (died 1264), Albertus Magnus (died 1280), Thomas Aquinas (died 1274); and Roger Bacon (c. 1214-1294), the liberal theologian, who wrought and thought in

<sup>1</sup> H. Taylor, *The Medieval Mind*.



advance of his own times, and whose brilliant and forward teaching has been rescued in later days from his evil repute as a necromancer. Dante knew these all : Books X to XIII of his *Paradiso* are filled with allusive praises and closely-reasoned appreciations of the dominant Christian Aristotelians. Nor did he omit the foreign doctors, chiefly Jews and Arabs of Spanish birth, who kept bright the torch of learning when it was burning low among the Gentiles. Solomon ben Judah ibn Gebirol (died 1070), known in the Schools as Avicbron and among scholars as the Jewish Plato, was the admitted master of Duns Scotus (died 1308). Abul Hamid Mohammed ibn Ahmed ibn Roshd (died 1198), known in the Schools as Averroes, was a foremost commentator on Aristotle. Aristotle himself, of course, was committed by Dante to ' the abysmal valley dolorous ' (*Inferno*, IV) of the first circle of hell : the limbo of ' sorrow without torment ' reserved for the dead who had ' merit ' but not baptism.

' For such defects, and not for other guilt,  
Lost are we, and are only so far punished,  
That without hope we live on in desire '.

However high their disciples might mount, however proudly Dante ranged himself sixth with Homer, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan, yet these, being before Christianity, were not admitted to the light. There, with infinite respect, but with very definite theology, Dante located Aristotle, ' the Master of those who know '.

If we reconstruct after Dante's pattern the fabric of scholastic philosophy, we note that its significance to learning does not reside in its written books. Even Roger Bacon's *Compendium* and his *Opus majus*, *Opus minus*, and *Opus tertium* gather dust on our shelves to-day. No ; the Schoolmen's contact with modern literature is mainly at two points. First,



they helped to introduce system, order, and method into the chaos of ideas. They arranged thought compartmentally. By their grammars and other aids to study they evolved such measure of accurate reasoning as the limits of inquiry allowed. Secondly, they controlled the channels of what we now call chemistry and physics. All investigation of causes, all speculation and research, lay in the Schoolmen's hands, and every Schoolman, we remember, followed either St. Dominic or St. Francis.

### III. POLITICS.

Dante sang like a Troubadour. Dante reasoned like a Schoolman. A third factor in his making was the politics of his age.

Politics might well seem remote from the pleasure of European literature, but their influence has not been unknown even more recently than the thirteenth century, and the early manhood of Dante was spent in the shadow of history. We go back for a moment to Charlemagne, and to the sons who burnt his library and disputed his inheritance. In the long struggle which ensued at the death of the Emperor Charles, the royal Houses of Suabia and Bavaria were rivals for the Imperial crown. The former were the Guelfs and the latter the Ghibellines (Weiblingen), and their family names were presently transferred to the two parties to the conflict for temporal and spiritual supremacy which was waged between the Emperors in the North and the Popes in the South. The Guelf or Papal cause was represented as popular or democratic; the Imperial or Ghibelline as aristocratic by right of birth. Adherents of both parties were found in most cities of the Empire. Especially in Italian city-states, where commercial and trading interests

raised the middle-classes to civic self-esteem, they acquired disastrous significance. There were factions even within a party, and Dante, a Prior of Florence, was proscribed in 1302 and sentenced to exile for life in a feud between the Black Guelfs and the White.

A significant date in this struggle is 1152. In that year Frederick I, 'Barbarossa', a descendant from both high houses, had hoped to compose their rivalry and to wear Charlemagne's purple as his reward. The reigning Pope was Hadrian IV, notable as the only Englishman who has ever occupied the Holy See. Hadrian's peace was affronted by the activity in Rome of a reforming preacher, Arnold of Brescia, and Arnold's boldness was Barbarossa's opportunity. In 1154 the Emperor crossed the Alps. He proffered the support of his presence to the distracted Papal Court, and his overtures were gratefully accepted. Arnold of Brescia was burnt at the stake, and Barbarossa's Imperial crown was placed on his head by Hadrian's freed hands.

But the truce between Papacy and Empire proved of short duration. Frederic the Ambitious died, and was succeeded by his infant grandson, Frederic II, 'The Magnificent', later famous for his encouragement of Provençal poetry in Sicily. To him was appointed guardian (1198) Pope Innocent III: a great statesman, as Stephen Langton's record stands to witness in English history; a merciless hunter of heresy, as we saw in the Albigensian Crusade. Innocent died in 1216, and his Imperial ward, grown to manhood, lost no time in claiming his inheritance. So the struggle broke out afresh, and so bitter became the conflict between Ghibelline Empire and Guelf Papacy that Pope Innocent IV (1243-54) even granted Crusaders' privileges to those who fought on his side. And this time the Pope was to win. Fate conspired

with authority. The Magnificent and his son died young, and at Benevento in 1266 the remnant of their forces was destroyed.

Once more the scene is shifted. The Papal triumph proved short-lived. For the power of France had been growing while these wars were being waged beyond the Rhine (how new all these old tales sound !), and the French King Philip the Fair (Philip IV, 1285-1314) found himself strong enough to nominate a Pope of his own selection. He chose Clement V to replace Boniface VIII, who had sentenced Dante to exile ; and in 1309 Clement paid the price of his election by removing, at Philip's behest, the seat and machinery of Papal rule—great Rome herself, as it seemed—to Avignon. There, in ' Babylonian captivity ', as Luther was later to phrase it, the Papacy lingered for more than seventy years.

And this happened in Dante's very lifetime. He was born in 1265, the year before Benevento. He grew up amid memories of the events which we have sketched so hastily and imperfectly. The spirit of an older ordinance, ' Thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, This is because of that which the Lord did unto *me* when *I* came out of Egypt ', was the spirit of direct participation which he poured into his anti-Papal zeal. In his own person he had suffered banishment. He knew

' how savoureth of salt  
The bread of others, and how hard a road  
The going up and down another's stair '.

—*Paradiso*, XVII.

In *Purgatorio*, XXXII, he represented his oppressor, Pope Boniface, as a harlot wantoning with Philip the Fair, and driven in wrath across the forest. In *Inferno*, XIX, he committed Boniface and Clement to the third trench of the eighth circle of hell—

‘ Dost thou stand there already,  
 Dost thou stand there already, Boniface ?  
 By many years the record lied to me.  
 Art thou so early satiate with that wealth,  
 For which thou didst not fear to take by fraud  
 The beautiful lady, and then work her woe ? ’

And in *Paradiso*, XXXII, the angelic choir reddened with wrath at St. Peter’s denunciation of Boniface—

‘ He who usurps upon the earth my place,  
     My place, my place, which vacant had become,  
     Before the presence of the Son of God,  
 Has of my cemetery made a sewer  
     Of blood and stench, whereby the Perverse One,  
     Who fell from here, below there is appeased ! ’

But the history which Dante read and lived inspired him to more than invective poetry. His instinctive passion for Italy, and his belief in the coming of an Italian prince who would set right the woe of all the world, swallowed up vengeance and vindictiveness. Dante schooled himself to a statecraft above party. If he despised the weakness of the Guelfs, he hated the cruelty of the Ghibellines. He traversed in his poems the cities of Italy, and found no peace in them. In the true city of God on earth, Cæsar should govern his temporalities in the pattern of the Divine economy ; and Dante, the new Virgil of Rome reborn, would create the utterance of his lips—

‘ Ah ! servile Italy, grief’s hostelry !  
     A ship without a pilot in great tempest !  
     No Lady thou of Provinces, but brothel ! . . .  
 Search, wretched one, all round about the shores,  
     Thy seaboard, and then look within thy bosom,  
     If any part of thee enjoyeth peace !  
 What boots it, that for thee Justinian  
     The bridle mend, if empty be the saddle ?  
     Withouten this, the shame would be the less . . .  
 Come and behold thy Rome, that is lamenting,  
     Widowed, alone, and calleth day and night :  
     “ My Cæsar, why hast thou forsaken me ? ”  
 Come and behold how loving are the people ;  
     And if for us no pity moveth thee,  
     Come and be made ashamed of thy renown ! . . .  
 For all the towns of Italy are full  
     Of tyrants ’.

—*Purgatorio*, VI.

## IV. ALLEGORY AND DREAM.

The fascination of contemporary politics and the increasing perception of moral issues were not open to free discussion by poets of the thirteenth century. They might hint at these things by allusion, and represent them by figures of speech; they might adapt to worldlier topics the modes invented by romance; but in an era of ecclesiastical dominion, unrayed by any modern light, satire, criticism, and malice were compelled to conform to the old rules. Thus, Dante opened his epic poem with the following verses (*Inferno*, I)—

‘Midway upon the journey of our life,  
 I found myself within a forest dark,  
 For the straightforward pathway had been lost.  
 Ah me! how hard a thing it is to say  
 What was this forest, savage, rough and stern,  
 Which in the very thought renews the fear’.

The dark forest is understood to refer to Florentine politics as well as to the jungle of human life. It was a phrase selected by an allegorist for the sake of its obscurity, and the poet was secure in the knowledge that it would appeal to those for whom he wrote. A present-day poet, even more a present-day journalist, anxious to launch his shafts of satire at the failings and crimes of politicians, would drive straighter, though he might not hit harder. The aim and the result may be the same, but we have to deal with a different method of attack. Poets do not write in Dante’s way to-day; and, before discussing any book written in Dante’s generation, two factors common to all the books may profitably be considered.

The first is personification. Charlemagne, Arthur, Alexander, and all the panoply of medieval courts-of-love were receding a little from public interest. Sounds from the world outside, from the market-places and village-greens, began to break those

mannered conventions. But busy purveyors of fiction were not yet ready to supply elements of drama from real life. They began to feel their way towards this great consummation by inventing ideal or abstract characters, lifelike instead of living personages. They insulated certain human qualities and represented them in place of the whole man. Instead of a frail or virtuous woman, they personified Frailty or Virtue ; instead of a miser, Avarice ; and they even extended this practice, and employed the symbol of an animal to typify the quality of the man. Thus, in the first fifty lines of the *Inferno*, a panther stands for the pleasure-seeking policy of Florentine factions, a lion for the ambition of the French king, and a she-wolf for the greed of the Papal court. The example of the Hebrew Prophets is obvious : ‘ A lion out of the forest shall slay them, a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities ’, cried Jeremiah in his wrath. But the literary device of personification traced its immediate descent from Prudentius, a Christian Latin writer in Spain, who died about A.D. 400. Prudentius freely employed it in a poem on ‘ The Battle of the Soul ’ (*Psychomachia*), in which Faith contended with Idolatry, Patience with Anger, Shame with Passion, Humility and others with Pride, till at last victorious Faith built a temple to Christ. This great medieval exemplar was eagerly consulted ; and, though much that was frigid and insipid was written in its likeness, yet it served the cause of character-description and increased the resources of style. Later, the more famous works of Brandt, Bunyan, and Swift revealed in Allegory, full-grown, all the possibilities of personification. The essential business of Allegory is to convey a meaning to the reader secondary to the literal meaning of his images and words. Dante was not in a forest, nor was Christian in the Valley of



Humiliation ; or, rather, life is not a jungle, nor is difficulty a hill. For Allegory is in effect an elaborate system of metaphor, worked out in all its relations ; and deeply imaginative writers, such as Dante in verse and Bunyan in prose, used it to heighten and transform the superficial appearances of things.

A second favourite device which helped the illusion of Allegory was that of the Dream. Many medieval poems opened action in dreamland, which proved a convenient refuge from arbitrary kings and warring popes. The criticism which the Church prohibited and which the State discouraged, as Dante's exile stands to witness, might range more freely in the realm, where, as Chaucer wrote in *The House of Fame*, the most Dantesque of his poems—

‘ Spirits have the might  
To make folk to dream a-night ’.

Once more an early Christian Latinist is to be credited with the origination of the device. It is derived directly from Macrobius, who flourished about A.D. 400, and whose further title to literary repute is his belief, adopted by Dante, in the infallible guidance of Virgil. Macrobius wrote in prose a commentary on a fragment of Cicero's ‘ Republic ’, entitled ‘ The Dream of Scipio ’ (*Somnium Scipionis*), and it is a curious fate, which Cicero's vanity would have appreciated, that this extract from his lost *de Republica* should have become the chief source of the dream-convention in the poetry of the Christian Middle Ages. An early twelfth-century dialogue between the Body and the Soul, which found hundreds of imitators, started with the poet's dream of a soul suddenly confronted by the body which it had recently quitted, and this idea was gradually embellished and improved into variants of the *iter Paradisæ*, or road to Paradise, so popular with medieval fabulists. A famous instance



of this type was the *Voie de Paradis* of Guillaume de Digulleville (died *c.* 1360), and here, too, we see the beginnings of Bunyan's more perfect *Pilgrim's Progress*.

## V. SATIRISTS AND MORALISTS.

We return here with greater confidence to the suggestion noted above, that the writers became 'more moral' as the thirteenth century grew to manhood.

Take Ruteboeuf in France, for example. His name was probably a nickname, and of his biography nothing is known, except that he was alive in 1230 and 1285, and that he was married in Paris, 1260. Yet Ruteboeuf emerges from his poems with clear and strongly-marked personality, the first Parisian *pur-sang*. He showed up the seamier side of the bright garment woven by de Joinville in his *Life* of Louis IX, the Crusader-saint. He wrote his own *Voie de Paradis*, lives of Saints Mary and Elizabeth, and a miracle-play called *Théophile*, all in the medieval tradition. More direct of his personal genius were his 'complaints' of Poverty and Marriage, and a dramatic *débat* on the *pros* and *cons* of Crusading, with a bias to the side of the conscientious objectors.

The dramatic instinct was pronounced in a French poet, Adam de la Halle, of the second half of the thirteenth century. He was called *le Bossu*, the Hunchback, of Arras, which fixes the place of his residence. Adam's *jeu parti* or *débat* of Robin and Marian was a pastoral dialogue, which was recited at Naples in 1283. A year or two later it was revived as *le jeu du Pèlerin* at Arras. As an early experiment in rustic opera, this dialogue belongs to the beginnings of European drama. Robin and Marian, it is to be

noted, were conventional names for the French shepherd and shepherdess. Later, the English forest-hero, Robin Hood, with his merry men, was identified with the French Robin, and Maid Marian was adopted into English folk-lore.

Crossing the boundary of the Rhine, so bitterly disputed in arms, so graciously bridged by art, we find a dozen or more names.

Neidhart von Reuenthal (c. 1180-1250), for example, was one of many German writers who transposed the key of knightly verse. He fitted rustic themes to the chivalric models, thus extending the scope and refreshing the appeal of Minnesong. Wernher, surnamed the Gardener, effected a like transposition in the region of romance. His *Meyer Helmbrecht* (c. 1240) was a tale of the village, and the first to deal with common life in preference to the repertory of the legend-cycles. Of like realistic stamp were the writings of Konrad von Würzburg, who died in 1287; and the name of Heinrich von Meissen (c. 1250-1318), who preferred the word *Frau* to *Weib*, as the epithet for woman, and was therefore known as *Frauenlob* (Women's Praise), should be added to this roll. The Minnesinger known as Tannhäuser, a name immortalized by Wagner, enjoyed light-o'-love adventures which made him the hero of the fabled Venusberg. His songs and satires of rural amours helped Minnesong to glide into folk-song. Ulrich von Liechtenstein (c. 1200-76) even caricatured the fading worship of *Minne* in a mock chivalric *Frauentienst* ('Service of Women'), and Steinmar von Klingenua (1251-93) was similarly interested to trace the social changes. A writer known as Freidank, signifying literally Free-thought, brought home from the Crusade of 1228 a manual of worldly-wise philosophy in the form of a moral poem entitled *Bescheidenheit* (=discrimination), which had a long

and an honourable vogue. Johannes Hadloub (*c.* 1300) is named as the last of the old type of Minnesinger, and Oswald von Wolkenstein (1367-1445) as the last Minnesinger of all.

Rudolf von Ems (1220-54) was the author of a conventional Alexandriad, but he made a notable departure in his apologues and tales versified from monkish chronicles. Especially popular for its moral application was Rudolf's *Barlaam and Josaphat*, which he adapted from Buddhistic lore, and in which he depicted the gracious influence of a hermit on a wealthy and worldly prince. Moral, too, in purpose and achievement was a Dutch poet, Jacob von Maerlant (1235-*c.* 1300), who after graduating in the themes of Alexander, Merlin, and Troy, made an independent departure in three poems entitled *Martin*. To Martin he opened his heart on most of the problems of his day : religion, politics, society ; and Maerlant's poetry forms a good part of a MS, now at Leyden, which is known as 'The Mirror of History' (*Spiegel historice*), and might even pass as early journalism. A minor Maerlant at the beginning of the fourteenth century was Lodewijk van Velthem.

A like interest in current affairs and a like moral and conscientious purpose are found in the Spanish writings of King Alfonso X of Castile, who reigned from 1252-84. Contemporaries called him the Wise, but Mariana, the Spanish historian of the sixteenth century, wrote of him more irreverently, that 'he was fitter for letters than for government ; he studied the heavens and watched the stars, but lost the earth'. King Alfonso seems to have said, as more foolish people have said since, that, had he been consulted at the Creation, he would have spared the Creator some absurdities ; and this pretension was derided by Fontenelle in his *Pluralité des Mondes*,

1686, and again by Byron in his *Vision of Judgment*, 1822—

‘ I settle all these things by intuition,  
Times present, past, to come—Heaven—Hell—and all,  
Like King Alfonso. When I thus see double,  
I save the Deity some worlds of trouble ’.

The wise king, thus rebuked by Mariana, Fontenelle, and Byron, has doubtless repented his temerity. It never detracted from the real benefits which he conferred on the young literature of Spain. We noted in Chapter I that the First General Chronicle was inspired and encouraged by Alfonso. Still more important was his work on Spanish constitutional law, which he called *Siete Partidas*, or the Seven Divisions of the Constitution (1256-63). The number seven was rather arbitrary. There were seven letters in the King's name, and there were seven subjects of instruction in the old ordnance-survey of the sciences, viz., grammar, logic, rhetoric (these formed the *Trivium*), music, astrology, physics, metaphysics (these formed the *Quadrivium*). It seemed appropriate to the medieval mind to adopt this magical seven for the framework of a scheme codifying the legal systems then current in Castile. As a sign of interest in social studies King Alfonso's *Siete Partidas* is a notable work of the age, and its fine literary taste and distinguished public idealism add to its permanent value. The royal jurist was also a poet, and writers as recent as Heine in Germany, Mérimée in France, and Adelaide Procter in England testify to the worth of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (sacred poems, chiefly on the Virgin Mary), which Alfonso partly wrote and partly caused to be written.

## VI. THE ROMANCE OF THE ROSE.

Many of these resources were utilized in the *Roman de la Rose*, the most popular poem of the Middle Ages, in many respects its most complete mirror, and an indispensable apprentice-poem for later writers.

Dream was there—

‘ En Mai estoie, ce songoie,  
El tems amoreus plain de joie ’.

‘ That it was May, thus dremed me  
In time of Love and Jollity ’ <sup>1</sup>.

Young Love was there—

‘ Lors estuet jones gens entendre  
A estre gais et amoreus  
Por le tems bel et doucereus.  
Moult a dur cuer qui en Mai n’aime,  
Quant il ot chanter sus la raimie  
As oisiaus les dous chans piteus ’.

‘ Than yonge folk entenden ay  
For to ben gay and amorous,  
The time is than so savorous.  
Hard is his herte that loveth nought  
In May, whan al this mirth is wrought ;  
Whan he may on these braunches here  
The smalë briddës singen clere ’.

Personification was there—

‘ Près de Biauté se tent Richece,  
Une dame de grant hautèce,  
De grant pris et de grant affaire.  
Qui à li ne as siens meffaire  
Osast riens par fais, ou par dis,  
Il fust moult fiers et moult hardis ;  
Qu’ele puet moult nuire et aidier  
Ce n’est mie ne d’ui ne d’ier  
Que riches gens ont grant poissance  
De faire ou aide ou grévance ’.

‘ Bisyde Beaute yede Richesse,  
An high lady of greet noblesse,  
And greet of prys in every place.  
But who-so durste to hir trespace,  
Or til hir folk, in worde or dede,  
He were ful hardy, out of drede ;

<sup>1</sup> Chaucer’s translation ; text and translation in Skeat’s *Chaucer*, vol. i.

For bothe she helpe and hindre may :  
 And that is nought of yisterday  
 That riche folk have ful gret might  
 To helpe and eek to greve a wight '.

Allegory was there, and satire, and social criticism, and the new moral tone of the new poetry of that day. For it happened by a very fortunate accident that the *Rose* was written by two authors, whose successive periods of receptivity corresponded to the change of sentiment which occurred in the course of the thirteenth century. Part I (4,070 verses) was written by Guillaume de Lorris (Lorris is in the valley of the Loire), and was published in 1237. Part II (18,004 verses) was added by Jean de Meun in or about 1277.

In the English version which was formerly ascribed to Chaucer, and of which, according to Prof. Skeat, the first 1,705 lines are Chaucer's and the rest are by two unknown translators, the conclusion of Guillaume's share is at the following words—

' And if that thou *foryete* me (forget)  
 Myn herte shal never in lyking be ;  
 Nor elles-where finde solace,  
 If I be put out of your grace,  
 As it shal never been, I hope ;  
 Than shulde I fallen in *wanhope* '. (despair)

Forty years afterwards his work, interrupted, probably, by early death, was completed, if completion is the right term for a continuation more than four times the length of the original, by Jean le Clopinel, *Lame John*, of Meun. Jean reopened the poem on the same note which had been struck by Guillaume's last word—

' Allas, in wanhope ?—nay, pardee ! '

But he quickly left ' wanhope ' behind—

' For I wol never despaired be.  
 If Hope me faile, then am I  
 Ungracious and unworthy ;  
 In Hope I wol comforted be,  
 For Love, when he bitaught hir me,  
 Seide, that Hope, wher-so I go,  
 Shulde ay be relees to my wo '.



The new lines breathed the spirit of the new age, and the two writers were different by temperament as well as by time. Guillaume had the sweeter fancy, Jean the sturdier imagination ; and it may have been the fault of his lameness, or it may have been the spirit of the age, but when he took over Guillaume's fragment, the rose was shattered at his touch. Why he took it over we do not know. His main industry was translation (including Boethius's 'Consolation of Philosophy'), and his *Testament*, 1296, is a medieval medley of sentiment and satire. But the *Rose* was popular and handy, and, looked at merely as a sequel, Jean's contribution of Part II was as audacious as any on record.

Guillaume's Love-dream in a Garden had been designed as an allegory of fancy—

‘ It is the Romance of the Rose,  
In which al the art of Love I close ’.

Amant, the lover, was met by Sir Mirth, Fair Welcome, Lady Gladness, Wanhope, Courtesy, Shame, Sweet-Seeming, Beauty, and others, who helped or hindered his intention to find the Lady of the Rose. Jean, a scholar of parts, and plainly a freethinker, enlarged the scope of this allegory to a politico-social attack on the institutions of his day. He greatly extended the rôle of Reason, and he introduced Nature, False-Seeming, and other elements of discord. Reason discourses at length on the old, chivalric tales, and points a satiric moral for the confusion of love-idealists. Nature riddles the systems which ranked as philosophy in the thirteenth century, and the exposure of False-Seeming's hypocrisy gives further occasion for long harangues. Thus, the ‘ Romance of the Rose ’ drew together by the accident of its dual authorship the main threads of medieval genius. Guillaume's chief contribution was the

Ovidian psychology of love. Jean incorporated in it the stories of the *chansons de geste*, laughed at the pretensions of the Schoolmen, and pricked the conscience of the public as to priests' faith and women's honour. The poem has good qualities in both kinds, and its influence was immediate and permanent. It was multiplied by copyists. The clergy quoted from it as from the Bible. Purists assailed its morality, and stylists extolled its art. It was translated into every foreign tongue, and was frequently edited to suit the taste of later generations. It is still supreme as a picture of the parti-coloured life of the Middle Ages, and to most of us its music still appeals, with far more force than its satire, as a faint, clear prelude to the orchestra, which, to vary a well-known phrase, has made poetic Europe what it is.

## VII. THE ROMANCE OF REYNARD THE FOX.

The moral hinted at in Allegory was emphasized in Fable. *De te fabula*, 'the point of the fable is directed at you', is a phrase which has become proverbial; and we can trace the modern Fable back to the *Fabliau* of Northern France, where it flourished at the time of the growth of social consciousness and of the emergence of the middle-class to self-expression; roughly, from 1250 to 1350.

In ten or more polished couplets of verses in eight syllables, the Fable-writer would tell a tale of the common day's ordinary concerns, with the laughter turned against a human foible. The weakness of women's virtue or the shallowness of clerical holiness was the favourite butt, and a spice of *esprit Gaulois* was inherent in them all. They illumined a section of society remote from knights' camps and ladies' bowers, and, geographically, too, they were of the

centre. A trustworthy historian bids us look for the home of the French Fable—

‘ at the very heart of French soil, in Champagne and Picardy, in all the jolly towns and villages where no man could escape social contact with his neighbours. There is the classic land of the Fable, and there at all epochs flourished naughty tales, natty quips, bold satires, directed at husbands, wives, and priests ’ <sup>1</sup>.

The naughtiness is not to be denied. But French taste has the deftness to deflect, at the pen’s point, as it were, the worse offence of coarseness ; a native delicacy of form redeems the indelicacy of matter ; and we could ill spare these little tales, in which, point by point, the worshipful heroine of chivalry steps out of the veil of romance, and is revealed a true woman of the people, ready of wit, quick to deceive, ill to be deceived. so familiar throughout French literature. In the French *Fabliau* of the late thirteenth century we realize the succession of Jean de Meun, the social satirist, to Guillaume de Lorris, the fanciful allegorist.

We shall come to a revival of Fable, or, perhaps, more properly, to its consummation, in La Fontaine in the eighteenth century. In our present period we are concerned with a certain species of this *genre*, which had a big vogue from the start, and which inspired a middle-class *roman* almost contemporary with the *Roman de la Rose*. The species was the Animal-Fable, and the romance was the *Roman de Renart*.

Students of origins are aware that the Beast-tale, or Bestiary, had a long and honourable descent. It went back from the Christian Middle Ages to the first and second centuries, A.D., when Phaedrus, a Roman,

<sup>1</sup> G. Lanson, *Histoire de la Littérature française*.

and Babrius, a Greek, made collections of fables about animals. Drawing partly from these collections, Marie de France, the writer of Breton lays, wrote her *Ysopet*, mentioned in Chapter I. But the title of her book suggests an even remoter source, and this we discover in Æsop, whose collection dates from the sixth century, B.C.; while Æsop, the Samian slave, had drawn on Eastern sources, including the Birth-tales of Buddha and the Fables of Bidpai. Among other source-books available in the Middle Ages were the 'Natural History' of Pliny (the Elder, *fl.* A.D. 70), and a long series known as *Physiologi*, with an Egyptian *Physiologus* at their head: a kind of sacred natural-history books, inculcating moral virtues by observation of animal life. The 'Book of Secrets' by Albertus Magnus, a leading *savant* of the thirteenth century, is also to be mentioned in this context.

But the multiplication of models is unnecessary. Briefly, the vogue is to be traced to a very common human practice, as simple as it is instinctive. The habit of comparison between a busy man and a bee, a subtle man and a serpent, a stupid man and an ass, an industrious man and an ant, a greedy man and a pig, may be observed in every present nursery, and was doubtless familiar in the childhood of the human race. More important than the origins are the specimens, and mention may be made by anticipation of the fascination exercised by these source-books on the antiquaries and wits of a later date. The old bestiaries, herbaries, volucraries (bird-tales), lapidaries (precious stone-tales), etc., were ransacked for their quaint lore and for their yet more curious images.

To these aspects we shall return in due course. Meanwhile, in the thirteenth century, gleaners in the field of plenty found their labour facilitated by two external causes, not unconnected with each other.

One was the enlargement of the social circle and the shifting of its centre away from court and camp to civic mart and rural green, with a consequent readiness of opinion to test and revise moral values. The other was the striking analogy, seized by what was then the new criticism, between types of the animal creation and the heroes of the Carlovingian legend.

Everyone knew Charlemagne. Everyone knew the old tales of the king's crafty barons and needy monks, his powerful fangs worn to decay, his authority flouted and set at nought, his credulity as long as his beard, and his empire parted among his heirs. The *chansons de geste* of Charlemagne were familiar in every feudal tongue, and feudal society in those days reproduced again and again the experiences narrated in the *chansons*. A baron home from the war might find a rival in his castle. A knight might be worsted in encounter with a self-seeking steward of his property. A homely countryman might be fleeced by a clever man about town. The Fox and the Lion met in many relations of life, and the folk-lore of animal life which Æsop, Babrius and Phædrus had handed down to a hundred practitioners was exploited by satirists of society in imitation of the Charlemagne tales. Noble the Lion was the old king, outwitted by Reynard the Fox, and all the menagerie of beasts was used, as the Fable grew, to point under transparent disguises the universal moral of nimble wits and empty crowns. The satire was imposed upon the folk-tale, and the vast and ramified Beast-epic known as the *Roman de Renart* was the result.

We need not quote from it to-day. Thomas Carlyle, a hundred years ago, wrote that 'the story, more than any other, is a truly European performance: for some centuries the universal Household

Possession and Secular Bible, read everywhere, in the palace and the hut'. In its first completed form it ranged through the world of man-like beasts in more than a hundred thousand verses. France and Germany sent their contributions, and modern writers enumerate twenty-seven branches of the story, composed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Caxton in 1481 imprinted the Fable in English. Goethe in 1792 wrote a version of *Reinecke Fuchs*. But it is distracting to dwell on the anatomy of what was written wholly for delight. Whatever its origin and later history, the true home of the *roman* is France. The names of the animals are French, French wit enlivens the recital, and sundry indications point to Picardy as the first home of the Fable. Before Reynard had finished his adventures he had proved his aptness for anything that offered itself. He reconciled warring theologians. He went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He told tales of the Alexandriad. He became Confessor to Lion the King. In a word, or, most appropriately, in the words of Ste.-Beuve, the greatest French critic, this romance of Reynard the Fox was

' the satirical masterpiece of the thirteenth century. It echoes the rancour of the small against the great, and expresses the political or religious daring of statesmen, *jongleurs*, monks, and scholars. Moreover, it is animated with that imperious spirit against women, which is so sharply and repugantly emphasized in many of the *fabliaux*'.

We come through the satirists and fabulists, through the allegorists, the Schoolmen and the Troubadours, to the greatest writer of the Middle Ages, perhaps the greatest Italian poet,



## VIII. DANTE ALIGHIERI (1265-1321),

who drew inspiration from them all.

Dante's works, to pass at once to these, may be enumerated as follows—

1. *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, a Latin treatise on the 'vulgar' (Italian) tongue, which, in the early stages of its foliation in Tuscany, Dante had the courage and the foresight to describe as 'illustrious'. His choice of it as the medium of his own poetry, and the extraordinary triumphs which he won in it, conferred an obligation on his fellow-countrymen which they have always loyally acknowledged. Prof. Saintsbury, in his *History of Criticism*, describes this treatise of the thirteenth century as 'on a line with the very greatest critical documents of all history', and we have referred elsewhere to Dante's brilliant and convenient classification of the *Langues d'Oc, d'Oïl, and de Si*, for Northern and Southern French and Italian respectively.

2. *De Monarchia*, another Latin treatise, which students interested in the development of the theory of government should read in conjunction with Dante's epistle (c. 1309) 'To all the Kings in Italy, Senators, Dukes and Peoples'. It was, alas, a plurality of kings which was Italy's trouble in those days, and Dante, as an exiled patriot, hugged the far-off hope that the Emperor Henry VII would prove the single saviour and regenerator. He expounded, in terms of the highest idealism, his conception of the true aim of Italian governance, when Cæsar should be just and Peter should be wise.

3. *Il Convito*, 'The Banquet', in Italian prose. The title was taken from Plato's *Symposium*, but the prose, a new organ of Italian style, was a little tentative and immature. The attraction of the treatise

lies in its account of the poet's surrender to philosophy, and in the discourses on love and virtue with which he adorned his theme.

4. *Canzoniere*, 'Songs'. These were the poems of Dante's youth, written in his Troubadour days, when, as we saw above, the new 'glory of our tongue' passed from the keeping of the two Guidos to him whose fuller songtide would 'chase them both from the nest'. We saw then what kind of songs they were which Guinicelli, Cavalcanti, and Dante poured out successively to love : how rare in sentiment, how rapturous in adoration, how mystical in communion with the spirit beyond the flesh. We need not adduce fresh evidence. Here it is more appropriate to explain that the Italian *canzone* is a lyrical poem arranged in strophes of a carefully complicated design. The Sonnet, new in this epoch, was a single strophe of a *canzone*. Its fourteen lines were an octave and a sestet (eight lines and six), with the rhymes disposed as follows—

	Octave, <i>abbaabba</i> ; Sestet, <i>abcabc</i> ,
or	<i>abccba</i> ,
or	<i>abbacc</i> ,
or	<i>ababcc</i> ,

with other possible variations. The sonnet-form became a test of the quality of lyric poets, and it passed through Petrarch, as we shall see, into the inheritance of the Renaissance in France, Spain, England, and other countries. Another lyric measure was the Madrigal, arranged in triplets and couplets, as an offshoot of pastoral song.

Special mention is due to the Italian metres with linked rhymes (*rime incatenate*, a chain of rhymes) which were practised mainly in two sorts, *viz.*—

- i. *Terza rima*, of which the rhyme-scheme is  
*aba, bcb, cdc, ded . . .*,  
 and which Dante used in his *Commedia* ;

- ii. *Ottava rima*, of which the rhyme-scheme is *abababcc*.

It will be noted that the *ottava rima* stanza is identical with one of the variants of the sestet of the sonnet. It is akin to, though not identical with, the metres invented in England by Chaucer and Spenser, and it found its practitioners in Spain. *Terzarima*, on the contrary, never struck deep roots outside Italy.

Next, in 5, *La Vita Nuova*, 'The New Life', and 6, *La Commedia*, 'The Comedy', which posterity agreed to call 'Divine', we come to the essential Dante. To certain aspects of the greatness of these works a few more words must be given.

And, first: If hate lit the fires and froze the ice in Dante's hell, it was love, lyric-love finely spiritualized, which 'moved the sun and the other stars' in his heaven. For Dante, above all, was the ideal lover. Through all his experiences and travail, whether of body or soul, he sought and followed and cherished one only and one always, the Beatrice of his single adoration. Who she was matters little to-day; whether Bice Portinari (died 1290) or another; nor how often or seldom they met in the society in which they moved. The veritable Beatrice is the Beatrice in literature, the divine lady of compassion, who took Virgil's place as guide when the shades of Purgatory were fading in the purest light of inmost Heaven, and not even the greatest of Pagan poets might enter the Paradise of the Blest. There Theology wore Beatrice's shape, and Reason spoke with Beatrice's voice, and the three were inextricably one, and at last the perplexities of mortality were resolved in perfect love and perfect knowledge—

'Ever the Love which quieteth this Heaven  
Welcomes unto itself with such salute,  
To make the candle ready for the flame'.

—*Paradiso*, XXX.

Dante's candle was ready betimes. He was nine years of age, he tells us, when Beatrice first crossed his path, and—

‘ From that time forward Love quite governed my soul. . . . And albeit her image, that was with me always, was an exultation of Love to subdue me, it was yet of so perfect a quality that it never allowed me to be overruled by Love without the faithful counsel of reason, whensoever such counsel was useful to be heard ’ <sup>1</sup>.

Do we believe it? We must. The *Divina Commedia* confirms it in accents of love-making more sublime than any spoken by mortal man to mortal woman—

‘ Unto the loving accents of my comfort  
 I turned me round, and then what love I saw  
 Within those holy eyes I here relinquish ;  
 Not only that my language I distrust,  
 But that my mind cannot return so far  
 Above itself, unless another guide it.  
 This much upon that point can I repeat,  
 That, her again beholding, my affection  
 From every other longing was released.  
 While the eternal pleasure, which direct  
 Rayed upon Beatrice, from her fair face  
 Contented me with its reflected aspect,  
 Conquering me with the radiance of a smile,  
 She said to me—*Turn thee about and listen ;*  
*Not in mine eyes alone is Paradise ’.*

—*Paradiso* XVIII.

So the new life in Love's service began on a May Day, 1274, when Bice Portinari, wearing a dress of ‘ a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited with her very tender age ’, was ‘ at the beginning of her ninth year almost, and I saw her almost at the end of my ninth year ’. The rest was the story of his soul's espousal, purified of all earthly dross. Such love, surpassing any Troubadour's, was revealed to the rapturous eyes of the

<sup>1</sup> *Vita Nuova* ; D. G. Rossetti's translation.

storm-tossed exile from Florence. Such reason, surpassing any Schoolman's, Dante excogitated from love. By an allegory within an allegory, the poet and his passion alike passed through the Inferno of desire and the Purgatory of suffering into the Paradise of fortitude and renunciation. The Beatrice of temporal conditions became the 'beata Beatrix' of the everlasting mystery of God. And if Dante's Paradise is delineated a little less clearly than his Inferno, we remember that supreme anguish is more easily imaginable than supreme bliss, and that the frescoes and paintings in Italian churches, to which the *Commedia* owed some of its word-pictures, were bound by like limitations of experience. But the impression of light and colour and the pervading radiancy of love are conveyed with unmatched skill.

There are other aspects to be noted, which we must pass more rapidly in review. The fascination of numbers, for example, so characteristic of the Middle Ages, which we remarked in the *Siete Partidas* of King Alfonso of Castile. The key-numbers for Dante were three and nine. He was nine years old when he met Beatrice. There are nine circles in his hell. There are three parts of the *Commedia*. Each part has thirty-three cantos. The metre is *terza-rima*, or linked threes. Next, we are to note for admiration Dante's landscapes and seascapes, which Ruskin (in *Modern Painters*) taught the nineteenth century to appreciate; his vividness, which inspired Sir Joshua Reynolds to paint the Ugolino episodes, and which render Flaxman's designs a transposition as well as illustration; his wild bitterness, which alienated Voltaire and the taste of the eighteenth century, with the honourable exception of Gray; his Platonism; his intense individualism; his 'beautiful style', which he faithfully ascribed to Virgil, magician and prophet of the Middle Ages, the first poet-visitant of

hell (*Aeneid*, VI) and Dante's guide to the forecourts of Paradise; his epic similes, derived from Homer, which Dante was the first to employ in modern literature; his metre, which he made a national possession; his symbolism, from the 'forest' of *Inferno*, I, to the last vision of *Paradiso*, XXXIII; his allusiveness; his sublimity; his tenderness. A volume might be written on every aspect, and indeed the Dante bibliography is vast.

Vaster than his actual influence, perhaps. For Dante founded no school, and left no disciples. He was early recognized as the final product of forces which had passed away. A Dante chair was established in Florence as early as 1373, with Boccaccio as its first occupant; and Dante students and societies have multiplied. But, outside Italy, at any rate, and except in Milton's epic poetry, there was no serious Dante revival till the beginning of the last century. Then Coleridge acutely called him 'a link between religion and philosophy', such a link as the Schoolmen had sought to forge; and Cary's English translation, 1814, stimulated a wholesome revival, and subjected Shelley, Leigh Hunt, and Carlyle to Dante's ennobling discipline. The new Romantic movement in Europe, recalling art to the Middle Ages, brought Dante back to renown, and Schlegel in Germany, Carducci in Italy, Rossetti in England, were foremost among his restorers. Rhetoric, archæology, theology, all have drawn from Dante's wells, and mystic love cannot aim beyond his mark. So the *Divine Comedy* holds its appointed place, and hosts of readers subscribe to Carlyle's verdict, in his lecture on *The Hero as Poet*: 'Europe has made much: great cities; great empires, encyclopedias, creeds, bodies of opinion and practice; but it has made little of the class of Dante's thought'.



## IX. PIERS PLOWMAN.

A small share of that little was vouchsafed to a poet born about 1330 on a Malvern hillside in England some ten years after Dante's death. Between the polished triads of the *Divina Commedia* and the alliterative verse of the *Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman* there is a gulf of artistic achievement: hardly less is the spiritual difference between the remote, sublime, metaphysical, scholastic Florentine exile and the practical, homely, social, Biblical English countryman. Yet something of Dante's impassioned truth and something, too, of his vocal hope were manifest in 'the tall, gaunt figure of Langland, passing through the jostling crowds of London streets to pray for the rich men's souls, and yet living his life in a world apart, a world of ideals of what ought to be' <sup>1</sup>. Both sought just government on earth; Dante from the King of kings, Langland from England's king. 'Were I king', Langland urged, 'no wrong should go unpunished or get grace by bribes, and Love should rule all'. The parallelism with Dante, rather than Dante's direct influence, is plain.

The poet's name, William Langland, or Langley, depends on an uncertain conjecture <sup>2</sup>. But convenience suggests the conclusion that the name be adopted for general use. After all, it is the poem

<sup>1</sup> E. Dale, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Prof. J. M. Manly of Chicago, in *Cambridge History of English Literature*, ii (1908), decided against the earlier conclusions of Skeat and Jusserand in favour of five several authors, of whom one only is known by name, John But. Prof. Snell, in *Periods of European Literature*, iii (1899), accepted the one-author view. Prof. Courthope, in *History of English Poetry*, i (1895), agreed that Langland left in his poem an anagrammatical clue to his own identity in the line—

" "I have lived in Londe," quod I, "my name is Longe Wille" " (which is further typical of the poet's scheme of metre and alliteration); but deprecated the introduction of 'even the appearance of scientific reasoning into what must necessarily always remain a region of nebular hypothesis.' Mr. A. Lang, in *History of English Literature* (1912), mentioned Langland's name as a matter of 'general supposition'.

that counts. We know that it was composed in three instalments: the first about 1362, after the Peace of Bretigny, and the great tempest of January 15th in that year; the second about 1377; and the third in the last decade of the fourteenth century. We recognize that the writer of the third differs from the writer of the first by an excess of pedantry and a defect of imagination. But these facts do not disprove the single authorship of William Langland. William Wordsworth's writings reveal even wider discrepancies of temperament over a period of thirty to forty years. *Piers the Plowman*, who is Peter the Church, starts in the character of a just man, and is gradually spiritualized into a symbol of Christ. His original dream in the Malvern hills slides, as dreams are apt to do, especially literary dreams derived through Picardy from Macrobius, into visions within visions. Therein the philosophy of virtue is expounded by the counsels of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest (do well, do better, do best), like a Scholastic treatise beaten into allegory, and it is observed that the social note which predominates at the opening of the poem takes a deeper religious tone as years advance and verses increase.

*The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman* was supplemented by a shorter and more practical poem, which bears no title of its own, but which English editors have designated *The Deposition of Richard II* or *Richard the Redeless*. A *Piers Plowman's Creed* and a *Plowman's Tale* (once wrongly attributed to Chaucer) belong to the *Piers* cycle but not to the author of the *Vision*. They testify to the wide popularity and real national significance of Langland's social and moral allegory, which, though little read to-day, ranks, like the English Bible of John Wiclif (c. 1320-84), in the list of the few supreme books of the fourteenth century which contained the promise of the Reformation.

## CHAPTER III.

### The Fourteenth Century.

#### I. GENERAL SURVEY.

It is always somewhat illusory, an illusion of space and time, to review under any one aspect an age diversified, like all others, by differences of class and climate, of temperament, creed, and will. We adopted that method in the age of Dante, because Dante's star-like radiance was unique in his generation. But even a star has other attributes than its shining, despite the limitations of the human eye, and we shall not insist on a likeness between talents so obviously distinct as those which illumined the fourteenth century in France, Spain, England, and the Netherlands. There is no single figure in literature round whom the writers may be grouped. There is no single movement of culture which spread its influence around.

We might sort the writers into classes, as chroniclers, story-tellers, and divines—

#### CHRONICLERS—

Ayala (1332-1407).

Froissart (1337-*c.* 1410).

#### STORY-TELLERS—

Juan Ruiz (*c.* 1280-*c.* 1350).

Boccaccio (1313-75).

Chaucer (*c.* 1340-1400).

## DIVINES—

Langland (*c.* 1330-*c.* 1400).

Wiclif (*c.* 1320-84).

Dutch Mystics, leading to Thomas à Kempis (1379-1471),

and put Petrarch (1304-74) in a class by himself, as a poet and an inspirer of poets. But no assortment is wholly satisfactory. Just as Langland chose to tell a story, though the purpose of his allegory was reform, so the three chief story-tellers in this century, the Spaniard, the Italian, and the Englishman, were likewise active as poets, and were affiliated by many close ties to the innovating poetic genius of Petrarch.

A sounder procedure is to start from some of the happenings of the times, and to leave the writers to reveal to us their separate methods of approach. Certain events in the fourteenth century could not fail to strike everyone's imagination. The Black Death, for example, whether it originated on battlefields or in sewers, spread with fatal facility, and communicated views on life and death which were repeated from nation to nation. It killed in 1348 two ladies celebrated in literature: Petrarch's Laura and Boccaccio's Fiammetta. The battlefields themselves were common ground; for an epoch of a Hundred Years' War was bound to produce like conditions in the belligerent countries. Trade, again, was a medium of exchange in ideas as well as in commodities, and helped immensely to stimulate the rise of an independent middle-class. The dislocation of labour, due to war and disease, and the partial failure of authority to devise remedies and relief, evoked problems common to all climes. In Florence, Boccaccio retired from them. Supported by an 'honourable company of seven ladies and three

young men', as he wrote in the Proem of his *Decameron*, he fled from the plague-stricken capital and passed the time in telling stories and singing songs; and, though 'the whole place was a sepulchre', he invented a garden of delight. In the North there were also retired companies, though moved by a different aim. Holy livers such as Eckhart (died 1327), Tauler (1360), Suso (1365), Groot (1384) and Radewyns (1400) formed themselves into the community of the Brethren of the Common Lot, and founded at Deventer and Hertogenbosh schools of thought and doctrine which grew to Reformation vigour. The supreme expression of their sentiment is found in the *Imitatio Christi* of St. Thomas à Kempis (the name came from Kempen, by Cologne), whose complete acquiescence in the bliss of a cloistral seclusion was as remote from Dutch art as from German politics. The heart-piercing <sup>1</sup> quality of the *Imitation* rings more truly in the author's fervid Latin than in any of the many languages into which it has often been rendered. Its other-worldliness is its most obvious characteristic, as worldliness is the mark of the *Decameron*; and, looking backward, we see the Reformation wrapped up in the spiritual appeal, which summoned Thomas to the cloister prepared for him by the Brethren of the Common Lot <sup>2</sup>. Looking backward, again, from Boccaccio's garden, we see the Renaissance wrapped up in the Florentine lovers' resolve, not to yield to darkness and despair, but to oppose the prevailing gloom with all the resources of the human senses. The objects were the same, South and North, however different the means that were chosen. The common

<sup>1</sup> The epithet is Hallam's.

<sup>2</sup> See Ullmann, *op. cit.*: 'Shall this quiet mystic, wholly immersed in the contemplation of Divine things, be placed in the ranks of those who paved the way for the Reformation? We boldly answer, Yes. Between the childlike, humble Thomas, and the heroic, independent Luther, there is a deep, inward affinity'.

purpose was to forget and to repair ; to forget the ravages of wrong, the evils of the world which they had left, and to repair by inner resources the broken spirit of medieval man. ‘ There ’, cried the lady of the *Decameron*, defending her retreat to rural scenes,

‘ There we shall hear the chant of birds, have sight of green hills and plains, of cornfields waving like the sea, of trees of a thousand sorts. There also we shall have a larger view of the heavens, which, however harsh to us-ward, yet deny not their eternal beauty ; things fairer far for eye to rest upon than the desolate walls of our city ’.

And not otherwise did Thomas à Kempis seek to forget the desolation, and to repair its wrack, by solitary communion with God.

We perceive this likeness across the centuries. We see more clearly than the writers how both equally were moved by experience of pestilence and war. But the common problems presented in the fourteenth century should never induce us to neglect the difference of the individual replies. Florence and Deventer alike were mourning the effects of the Black Death, yet Boccaccio wrote the *Decameron* and à Kempis the *Imitatio Christi*.

We may look at the matter in another way. This search for likeness in difference, this attempt to credit a past age with perceptions vaster than its knowledge, is sometimes more fascinating than profitable. Take

## II. JEAN FROISSART,

the French chronicler, for example. His birth, like Langland’s, coincided with the outbreak of the Hundred Years’ War. The successive defeats of French arms at Crécy, Calais, and Poitiers, and the peasants’ revolt known as *La Jacquerie*, all occurred



before he was twenty. No French youth of genius could see these events with sluggish blood. Yet what was Froissart's point of view? From what angle of vision did he survey them? Let us listen first to Sir Walter Scott, above all a sympathetic witness to the value of the chivalric tradition. Froissart's 'beautiful expressions of sorrow', Scott wrote in *Old Mortality*<sup>1</sup>, were reserved for 'the pearl of knighthood', while 'for sweeping from the face of the earth a few hundreds of villain churls, who were born but to plough it, the high-born and inquisitive historian has marvellous little sympathy'. Time has been on the side of the 'churls', and Froissart, careless of a future in which the dreams of *Piers Plowman* would come true, did not try to anticipate time. He did not attempt to write his chronicle with the pen of the sociologist. He did not know the social point of view, so admirably rendered by the historian—

'When Feudalism was fully established, society assumed a hierarchic gradation of classes, the strong man at the top as lord, the weak and conquered beneath as serfs. . . . Society was stable; men were in fixed relations to other men, and though there were higher and lower, strong and weak, there was little dissatisfaction; the morrow was sure to all, even to the destitute few. During the decline of Feudalism and after it, we find a different state of things. Society again became fluid and disorganized. We find risings of the people in England, France, and Germany, the three leading nations; risings of the Commonalty in England, Peasant Wars in Germany, Jacquerie in France, from the same common cause in each case'<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Claverhouse is speaking.

<sup>2</sup> W. Graham, *Socialism*, p. 28 ('International Scientific Series').

Nor did Froissart attempt to write his chronicle from the economist's point of view. We may doubt, again, if he knew it—

‘ Criticism on the existing system was uttered more forcibly in the fourteenth century by those who regarded the affairs of the times as plain men, exercising their common sense. There was a sharp contrast between the recognized duty of labour,—of accepting work as a personal discipline,—and the lives of the friars who lived in idleness as beggars. . . . The exactions of the monasteries from their serfs, as from the townsmen, who were their neighbours, gave continual cause for complaint and were the excuse for occasional outbursts ’<sup>1</sup>.

Both high authorities agree that the *Jacquerie* in France was an outward sign and effect of social and economic causes, described by one as ‘ common ’ and by the other as ‘ continual ’. Now hear Jean Froissart on the same subject—

‘ Anon after the deliverance of the king of Navarre there began a marvellous tribulation in the realm of France, as in Beauvoisin, in Brie, on the river of Marne, in Laonnois, and about Soissons. For certain people of the common villages, without any head or ruler, assembled together in Beauvoisin. In the beginning they passed not a hundred in number : they said how the noblemen of the realm of France, knights and squires, shamed the realm, and that it should be a great wealth to destroy them all ; and each of them said it was true, and said all with one voice : “ Shame have he that doth not his power to destroy all the gentlemen of the realm ! ” ’

<sup>1</sup> W. Cunningham, *Western Civilization*, p. 142 (‘ Cambridge Historical Series ’).

‘ Thus they gathered together without any other counsel, and without any armour saving with staves and knives, and so went to the house of a knight dwelling thereby, and brake up his house and slew the knight and the lady and all his children great and small and brent his house. And then they went to another castle, and took the knight thereof and bound him fast to a stake, and then violated his wife and his daughter before his face and then slew the lady and his daughter and all his other children, and then slew the knight by great torment and brent and beat down the castle. And so they did to divers other castles and good houses ; and they multiplied so that they were a six thousand, and ever as they went forward they increased, for such like as they were fell ever to them, so that every gentleman fled from them and took their wives and children with them, and fled ten or twenty leagues off to be in surety, and left their houses void and their goods therein.

‘ These mischievous people thus assembled without captain or armour robbed, brent and slew all gentlemen that they could lay hands on, and forced and ravished ladies and damosels, and did such shameful deeds that no human creature ought to think on any such, and he that did most mischief was most praised with them and greatest master. I dare not write the horrible deeds that they did to ladies and damosels : among other they slew a knight and after did put him on a broach and roasted him at the fire in the sight of the lady his wife and his children ; and after the lady had been enforced and ravished with a ten or twelve, they made her perforce to eat of her husband and after made her to die an evil death and all her children. They made among them a king, one of Clermont in Beauvoisin : they chose him that was the most

ungraciously of all other and they called him king Jaques Goodman, and so thereby they were called companions of the Jaquery. They destroyed and brent in the country of Beauvoisin about Corbie, Amiens and Mont-didier more than threescore good houses and strong castles. In like manner these unhappy people were in Brie and Artois, so that all the ladies, knights and squires of that country were fain to fly away to Meaux in Brie, as well the duchess of Normandy and the duchess of Orleans as divers other ladies and damosels, or else they had been violated and after murdered. Also there were a certain of the same ungracious people between Paris and Noyon and between Paris and Soissons, and all about in the land of Coucy, in the county of Valois, in the bishopric of Laon, Noyon and Soissons. There were brent and destroyed more than a hundred castles and good houses of knights and squires in that country'.—Chap. 182.

There is no sense of the common or the continuous, no foreground, background, or distance, in the impressions registered by Froissart of this 'marvellous tribulation' of 'mischievous people without captain or armour', who 'did such shameful deeds that no human creature ought to think on any such'. There is no perception in his recital of the serious thought on those deeds by professors of economics and sociology more than five hundred years afterwards. *Je suis un historien*. Froissart wrote; but his history takes its place in succession to the *chansons de geste* and to the chronicles in the chivalric tradition. More directly, he enjoyed the advantage of following Jean le Bel (1326-60), a chronicler of his own time and country, whose fine gifts of picturesque narration missed nothing of the pageantry of warfare. Froissart's *Chronicle* falls into four Parts, of which the first

version of Part I (1325-78) was little more than a paraphrase from le Bel. Later, he rewrote it more than once, as he checked the facts by travel and inquiry, and he adapted its tone to his own easier, confidential style. Parts II, III, and IV respectively covered the years 1378-85, 1385-88, and 1388-1400; and the Tudor translation by Lord Berners, completed in 1525, is still the best English presentation.

A large share of the permanent value of Froissart's chronicle of the fourteenth century is due to the fact that the writer, as Scott noted in two words, was 'high-born and inquisitive'. He trained his chivalric pen on courtly *virelis* and *pastourelles*, and, after the Peace of Bretigny, he paid a visit to England. There, at Queen Philippa's court, his fastidious eyes were spared the sight, which was moving Langland to realism, of the disbanded soldiery begging their bread along the countryside. Most of his busy days were spent with princes and potentates, and it is idle to ask how far this experience suits the impartial muse of history. To Froissart, the writing of war-chronicles was the prose-art of a poet of old romance, and he practised the verse-art all his life, composing at great length through many years a romantic *Méliador*, in the poetic cycle of the Arthuriad. Next to the advantage of high birth came Froissart's zest for personal inquiry. His acquaintance among statesmen and diplomatists were plied with diligent interrogatories, and he pieced the evidence together, with a skill worthy of Herodotus. He possessed, too, a prodigious memory; and his keen eye for detail and the wealth and colour of his narrative produced such a record of the fourteenth century as Langland could never have composed. Posterity can but return thanks that the picture has been drawn from both aspects.

## III. AYALA, JUAN RUIZ, DON JUAN MANUEL.

Chronicle, again, was the chief industry of Froissart's Spanish contemporary, Pedro Lopez de Ayala. After various adventures in diplomacy and arms, inevitable to his rank and generation, Ayala settled down as Grand Chancellor of Castile, 1398. He had been a prisoner in Portugal, and also in England, 1367 ; and he was a better statesman than Froissart owing to his wider experience of men. Ayala's *Cronica* of Spanish annals from 1350 to 1396 was distinguished by a sense of responsibility and of direct participation in the events which he narrated. They were wild times in Spain in his day. Kings Peter the Cruel and Henry II, John I and Henry III were Spanish monarchs whose reigns were marked by every grave characteristic of the century, and nothing is more noteworthy than the trouble which Ayala took to sift the tangles of evidence, and the smoothness with which he unravelled them. He had translated Livy into Spanish from the French of Bersuire, and this apprentice-work may have trained him in his effective device of heightening his narrative by direct speeches. His personal acquaintance with the speakers added considerably to the dramatic illusion.

Ayala, like Froissart, was a poet. He was one of the earliest admirers of the *Amadis* tales of the Arthuriad, naturalized, as we saw, on Spanish soil between their Breton origin and their French revival. He was one of the first to practise the new Spanish *arte mayor*, the 'superior kind' of native measure, which corresponded to and partly reproduced the Italian *ottava rima*, or stanza in eight verses with double rhymes. He translated the Sicilian 'Troy-book' by Guido delle Colonne, thus enriching Spanish



poetry with the story-matters of Theseus and Helen. He introduced Boccaccio to his fellow-countrymen, and he wrote a series of Castilian poems, known as the 'Palace Rhymes'. These *Rimados de Palacio* were mainly composed in foreign prisons, and they expressed a *sacra indignatio*, a bitter personal resentment, which enlivens their satire on courts and kings. Since Ayala was a very human person, as his *Cronica* shows, it is natural enough that this tone was considerably mollified after his return to Spain.

The 'Palace Rhymes' had two antecedents. The first notable poet in this vein was the writer known by his office as the Archpriest of Hita, and by name as Juan Ruiz. He was born about 1280, and died at about seventy years of age. Except for a rumour of his imprisonment at the hands of the Archbishop of Toledo, his life is to be sought in his poems. These survive now in about seven thousand verses on the fashionable topic of true love (*Libro de buen Amor*). We noted the clerk of Toledo who wrote (c. 1290) a tale of Cifar, Knight of God, and invented therein the romantic type of the *pícaro*, or rogue-hero; and we observed at the time that the rogue, or *chevalier d'industrie*, was to grow to important proportions in the history of fiction in Spain. Juan Ruiz enhanced his stature. He added a female companion to the male type of the *pícaro*, and her disreputable calling was as malodorous as his. She is known as *trota-conventos*, literally, a convent-runner; and her well-paid business was to contrive a breach of convent discipline, and to play the go-between for demure novices and ardent youths. Juliet's nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* is a typical *trota-conventos*, and her trade was not unknown to Roman Ovid and the French authors of the *Roman de la Rose*. We shall see in a later chapter how fully the character was developed in a Spanish novel, *Celestina*, 1499. But it first

entered modern fiction through Juan Ruiz, and the invention characterizes the man. His racy verse, his wide sympathy, and his shrewdness all make him excellent company, though he cannot be cleansed of dirt. In his ample borrowings from the repertoires of romantic fathers in France, the Archpriest seized on many a tale which a more delicate taste would have rejected; but not the most fastidious reader can fail to appreciate the individual touches which raised Ruiz far above the level of makers of romantic *rechauffée*. Critics compare his geniality with Chaucer's, the Spanish Archpriest's younger contemporary, and there was more than an accidental likeness in their ways of approach to modern life.

Ayala's second forerunner was Don Juan Manuel of Castile (1282-1348). This prince was nephew to King Alfonso, surnamed, as we saw, the Wise, and was Regent (1312-22) during the minority of Alfonso XI. With his wars and intrigues we are not concerned. As a Spanish man of letters he issued a scholarly abridgement of his uncle's *Cronica General*, and his own masterpiece in literature was the *Libro de los Enexiemplos del Conde Lucanor et de Patronio*, commonly known more briefly as 'Count Lucanor'. Don Juan wrote it in 1328-35, and it was imprinted in 1575. The first and most notable of its four divisions consists of fifty-one chapters of Castilian Nights' Entertainments, in which the pleasure-loving prince played the part of Caliph Count Lucanor. Don Juan drew on the source-books of Oriental fable, thus anticipating Boccaccio by a score of years, and his Castilian prose was as new, and masterly, and as full of promise for the future, as were the Archpriest of Hita's verse-forms. Don Juan ranks as the founder of prose-fiction in Spain, and some of his tales supplied hints to Shakespeare (in the *Taming of the Shrew*), Calderon, Lesage, and others,

The way to Boccaccio and Chaucer, and through them to the triumphs of modern letters, was set by the decoctors of romance, among whom the Archpriest of Hita and Don Juan Manuel were eminent. Froissart and Langland each held up his own mirror to the fourteenth century, and if the one reflected more light and the other more shadow, if the one was a son of the Knights and the other a father of the Reformers, this was a matter of climate and temperament, and does not detract from our gratitude to either. But the final measure of art is its emotional appeal. Writers who dragged the wells of legend, faery, and fable for imaginative invention in the realm of prose-fiction were forging an implement of literature, unexhausted, even inexhaustible, in power.

The first great master in that art was

#### IV. GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO,

(1313-75). Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch were all Florentine by descent, though none of them spent his life in Florence; and it is pleasant to look back across the centuries, and to remember that Boccaccio, Petrarch's friend, was the first incumbent of the first lectureship established in Dante's honour in his native city.

Boccaccio was a love-child, born in Paris; and there his mother, Jeanne, remained behind when little Jean (Giovanni) was taken home to Florence by his banker-father. He seems to have had an unhappy childhood and rather a wild youth. After failures at law and trade, Giovanni settled down to love and letters, finding his inevitable lady (Dante's example spread) in Maria d'Aquino, wife of a Neapolitan noble and natural daughter of King Robert of Naples. He served several years of mingled impatience and adoration, singing and sighing to

'Fiammetta', and he did not return from Naples to Florence till after 1348, when Donna Maria died of the plague.

Boccaccio's early heroines were fashioned in the likeness of his liege-lady. His *Filocolo* in Italian prose told the old tale of Florio and Biancafiore (Floire and Blanchefleur), which was the tale of Boccaccio and Fiammetta. His *Filostrato* in Italian octave stanzas told the old tale of Troilus and Cressida, which was the tale of Boccaccio and Fiammetta. His *Teseide*, a Virgilian epic with the same number of verses as the *Aeneid*, told the old tale of Palamon and Arcite and of their love for Emilia, which was the tale of Boccaccio and Fiammetta. His *Ameto*, a pastoral romance, revealed Fiammetta in every glade. His *Amorosa Visione* in *terza-rima* was an amorous vision of Fiammetta; and his *Fiammetta*, the last of this series, confessed its inspiration in its name.

Is it monotonous? Yes and No. The iteration offends modern taste and even repels modern credence. We suspect imposture in the grown man who turns every story which he tells to the praise of the 'impossible She' who had won his adoration in youth. But still we are grateful to Fiammetta. Her hold on Boccaccio's devotion, however mechanical it became, was the real and vivifying spark which changed the art-tale of chivalry into the form of the modern novel. We have traced the descent of those art-tales. We have seen how the siege of Troy was related by Dictys and Dares, and how the mediæval romancers hewed out their stories from the mass. We have mentioned the Sicilian 'Troy-book' and French Bénéoit's *Roman de Troie*, and we have noted the growing chivalrization (if the epithet may be invented) of the old heroic Greek myths. Now we note a new phase in this development. A flesh-and-blood heroine is introduced, in the person of Donna Maria,

whose place in Boccaccio's affections is present to him whenever he repairs to the old *matière de Rome*. He is always aware of Fiammetta. She is his Blanchefleur, his Criseyde, his Emilia, and we cannot estimate too highly the value to fiction, as an art, of this intrusion of the living he and she into the records of myth and chivalry. The insistent recurrence of Fiammetta is at the same time the occurrence of 'the first novel of psychology ever written in Europe'<sup>1</sup>, and the end justifies the means.

When we reach the first novel of psychology, we have passed a significant milestone on the road from medieval to modern literature. Tales to tell there had always been in plenty, and tellers of tales had never failed since the first *trouvère* supplied the first *jongleur* with the first story in his repertory. But how to tell a tale effectively, how to make the progress of the action express the characters of the actors, and to convince the reader's intelligence while his sense of adventure was being indulged—this was the novelist's appointed task. We have marked some stages in his preparation. We have seen the reaction of taste from the stock apparatus of the romancers, with their situations consecrated by tradition and their diction regulated by Ovid. We have watched this tradition wearing thin, and this diction losing its illusion. The thrusts and shafts of the Reynardists pierced the fabric of court-sentiment. Minnesong sought inspiration from the love of common man for common woman. Jean de Meun invaded the Garden and shattered the petals of the Rose. Juan Ruiz plucked ruder blossoms from the hedgerows of the countryside. But the reaction had strenuous opponents. When Chivalry ceased to be a creed, it became a very powerful cult. Thus, at Toulouse, as early as 1323, a 'very gay company' was established

<sup>1</sup> E. Hutton, *Giovanni Boccaccio*. (John Lane.)

to conserve the letter and spirit of the Provençal Troubadours. They danced and sang on May the First, and contended at Floral Games for emblematic prizes of minstrelsy : a golden violet, a silver eglantine, a silver marigold. A statue to Clemence Isaure, a renowned benefactress of the Games, was erected in 1557, and the Academy was still flourishing in the eighteenth century. The movement spread to Barcelona. More than one King of Aragon encouraged the cult of *el gai saber*, which had its college and its professors and its primer, the *Arte de Trobar*, written by Don Enrique de Villena (1384-1434). The succession of Castilian to Aragonese, as the master-dialect of Spanish literature, and the consequent succession of Saragossa to Barcelona, belong to a later chapter of Spanish literature. Meanwhile, Barcelona's primacy and her long stand in the old ways are attested by the fact that the first book ever printed on Spanish soil bore the name and date—'Barcelona, 1468'.

But the old tunes were forgotten, and the old landmarks were removed. Not all the revivalists and conservatives, interesting and notable though they were, could stay the tide of innovation. Even criticism, as we shall see, was gathering strength and courage in attack. The *trota-conventos* of real life destroyed the illusion of *madonna*. The 'blind mouths' of an esurient priesthood were made a laughing-stock in fiction long before they became an object-lesson of the transition from agriculture to industry. The prerogatives of birth were failing. The middle classes were coming into their own. Satirists ranged at liberty through the ancient haunts of romance, and Toulouse and Barcelona faded into a vision of the past. More and more it was a storyteller's business to reveal character and motives while he unfolded his plots. More and more the cunning



of the novelist reinforced the charm of the romancer.

This was Boccaccio's part in the

‘ *Hundred Novels*, or Fables, or Parables, or Stories, as we may please to call them, which were related in ten days by an honourable company of seven ladies and three young men in the time of the late mortal pestilence, as also some Canzonets sung by the said ladies for their delectation ’.

To the hundred tales, thus defined in the *Proem*, Boccaccio gave the title of ‘The Ten Days’, *Il Decamerone*, which were enlivened by the telling of them; and the seven ladies and three young men, who each led the revels for a day, were called Pampina, Neifle, Filomena, Fiammetta, Emilia, Lauretta, Elisa, Filostrato, Pamfilo, Dioneo. Quite frankly, as we saw at the beginning of the present chapter, they sought distraction and forgetfulness from the Black Death of 1348, of which Donna Maria had been a victim; and no breath of pity or terror, after a ‘brief exordium of woe’, ever dimmed the radiance of the atmosphere which the ten created around them.

Let one example stand for many. The tenth tale of the third day had been told,

‘ And now at its close the queen, seeing the term of her sovereignty come, took the laurel wreath from her head, and with mien most debonair, set it on the brow of Filostrato ’.

The retiring and elective sovereigns for the day exchange appropriate quips, and—

‘ Filostrato, perceiving that there was a scythe for each of his arrows, gave up jesting, and addressed himself to the governance of his kingdom. He called the seneschal, and held him strictly to account in every particular; he then judiciously

ordered all matters as he deemed would be best and most to the satisfaction of the company while his sovereignty should last ; and having so done, he turned to the ladies ’,

and sketched the programme for the morrow—

‘ “ Wherefore I am minded that to-morrow our discourse be of no other topic than that which is most germane to my condition, to wit, of those whose loves had a disastrous close : because mine, I expect, will in the long run be most disastrous ; nor for other cause was the name <sup>1</sup> by which you address me given me by one that well knew its signification ”.

‘ Which said, he arose, and dismissed them all until supper-time.

‘ So fair and delightsome was the garden that none saw fit to quit it, and seek diversion elsewhere. . . . Dioneo and Fiammetta fell a-singing. . . . Filomena and Pamfilo sat them down to a game of chess ’ ;

After supper,

‘ When the tables were removed, Filostrato, being minded to follow in the footsteps of his fair predecessors in sway, bade Lauretta lead a dance and sing a song. . . . So encouraged, Lauretta, with dulcet voice, but manner somewhat languishing, raised the ensuing strain ’.

Then follows one of the Canzonets, referred to on the title-page of the *Decameron*, and

‘ Some more songs followed by command of the king, who caused torches not a few to be lighted and ranged about the flowery mead ; and so the

<sup>1</sup> Filostrato = prostrate-in-love.

night was prolonged until the last star that had arisen had begun to set ' <sup>1</sup>.

And so to the Fourth Day, ' in which, under the rule of Filostrato, discourse is had of those whose loves had a disastrous close '.

It makes an attractive picture in the midst of the plague at Florence ; and, while it is fanciful to argue from the insouciance of the *Decameron* to a debased standard of social consciousness, and still more fanciful to trace in the escape of the Ten any deliberate allusion to the release of thought from medievalism, we admit that the 'Ten Days' revels were sensuous, even voluptuous. Not the soft names invented for the company, nor the ingenious shifts of lovers' trickeries, can conceal or modify their idle selfishness. They met to enjoy and to forget, and their swift, hard strokes of comic irony were driven relentlessly home. The illusion of insolent youth was sustained in the valley of the shadow. Yet this, if we think of it, was a great feat. We know from recent experience how hard it is to put by the presence of general danger, and to act or think as if it were not ; how few books written in wartime are neither *pro-war* nor *con-war*, but *non-war*. Yet Boccaccio, in a smaller world than ours, and presumably, therefore, more concentrated, contrived a literary retirement into a *non-plague* Florence, though Fiammetta herself had fallen a victim to the plague. Not without reason he was called Giovanni de la Tranquillità, Giovanni the Indifferent, the Easeful. And why did he resent the imputation ? Surely, from unconsciousness of the fault. He did not write his *Decameron* out of bravado, nor in order to flout propriety, but as the faithful expression of something true to Florentine experience ; as a sincere work of art, that is to say. ' The whole

<sup>1</sup> The translation is by J. M. Rigg. (Routledge's reprint, 1905.)

book glows with the joyousness of a race discarding dreams for realities, scorning the terrors of a bygone creed, revelling in nature's liberty, proclaiming the empire of the senses with a frankness which passes over into licence'. And it is described as 'an undesigned revolt against the sum of medieval doctrine' <sup>1</sup>.

This is its moral defence, its *apologia* for not being moral. This is the reply of the fourteenth century to the Dantesque gloom of the thirteenth. But observe that the revolt was 'undesigned'. Boccaccio was no doctrinaire modernist. His whole design in the *Decameron* was to present a hundred tales, out of the vast material behind him, more human, more convincing, more artistic, better written, and more harmoniously composed than any that had yet been made. He succeeded admirably in this design. He 'was the founder of the novel in the fourteenth century' <sup>2</sup>, and the pious memory of the founder (not less pious, indeed, for his fearless exposure of false pietism) is always to be held in honour.

To Boccaccio's influence as a novelist and to the fiction founded on his tales these pages will bring repeated evidence. Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* was particularly indebted to him in 1566, and Shakespeare was a creditor of Painter. As a scholar, too, Giovanni the Indifferent was a patient and an earnest worker, and he wrote several useful Latin works, well-thumbed by later inquirers. Among these were 'Genealogies of the Gods', a kind of Snorri's *Edda* of Western myth, 'The Falls (*Casus*, Happenings) of Illustrious Men', 'Fair Women', 'A Life of Dante', and others. An engaging aspect of his scholarship belongs to his friendship with Petrarch,

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy*.

<sup>2</sup> Sir S. Lee, *French Renaissance in England*.

to whom we shall shortly come. Here it is appropriate to turn from Italy to England; from Boccaccio to

## V. GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

For 'there is nothing more exhilarating in literary history', we are told, 'than the way in which Chaucer caught the secret of Boccaccio's work, and used it for his own purposes'<sup>1</sup>.

Chaucer caught Boccaccio's secret. This is the best way, perhaps, of appraising a literary debt, or of stating a literary likeness, which must not be judged by modern standards. When we learn on Prof. Skeat's authority that, out of 8,239 lines in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, 2,583 were taken from Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, our first impulse is to exclaim, What a lot! But the wiser critic is surprised at the moderation, not the extent, of his borrowing. There were 5,704 lines available, with none of which Chaucer's audience was acquainted. Few could read them in the original. Yet Chaucer's moderation was content to borrow rather less than half. He wrote his *Troilus and Criseyde* in 8,239 lines, and not a third were taken from Boccaccio. Where did the other two-thirds come from? Partly from Boethius (Boece), whose 'Consolation of Philosophy' Chaucer had translated or was translating, partly from Bénédict de Ste. More, partly from Guido delle Colonne, whose debt to Bénédict we have noted, and partly—the most important part of all—from the poet's own sense of fitness. Chaucer's originality in the Trojan tale was a matter of selection and combination. Not what a writer took, but how he used it, is the measure of literary art, when copyright and plagiarism were not.

<sup>1</sup> W. P. Ker, *Essays on Medieval Literature*,

Everyone could tell any story, *à nul homme entendant*, as Bodel said. One only could tell it in the right way; and Chaucer, starting to write *Troilus* a few years later than *Filostrato*, caught Boccaccio's secret, which Fiammetta had whispered in his ear, and still found the recipe inadequate to the needs of the tale as he conceived it. He saw in it more than Boccaccio had seen, and much more than Benoît and Guido. He saw in it Pandar's part, enlarged almost irrecoGNizably from the hints of previous romancers. He saw the complexities of character, the humour and pathos of novel situations; and, thus seeing, he summoned to his aid all the resources of interpretation: songs from Italian lyrists, dreams from Latin allegorists, counsels from Greek philosophers, and love, and life, and hate, and death. In this study of art's increase, as in every record of growth, lies the exhilaration spoken of above; and, appropriately enough, Chaucer closed his poem, thus edified and heightened, with an appeal to all 'young, fresh folks, he or she', to abandon worldly vanity and to acknowledge the sovereignty of love, knowing that

' All nis but a fair,  
This world, that passeth soon as flowers fair '.

And he inscribed the recital to two friends, who would appreciate his purpose and his 'form of old clerk's speech in poetry'—

' O moral Gower, this book I direct  
To thee, and to the philosophical Strode,  
To vouchensafe, there need is, to correct,  
Of your benignites and zeles good '.

To John Gower, a follower of Langland, we shall return very briefly later on; but neither he nor Ralph Strode, a Schoolman and a colleague of Wiclif, shared Chaucer's emancipation from the gloom of the previous century, nor his privity to Boccaccio's



secret. Chaucer met Boccaccio in Florence, which he visited in 1372 on a diplomatic mission for King Edward III, and we like to think of the meeting between the great Italian and the great Englishman, and to imagine with Savage Landor Chaucer's generous exclamation—

‘ I will attempt to show Englishmen what Italians are ; how much deeper in thought, intenser in feeling, and richer in imagination, than ever formerly : and I will try whether we cannot raise poetry under our fogs, and merriment among our marshes ’<sup>1</sup>.

But far more significant than their actual encounter was the meeting of the spirits of the craftsmen on the heights of artistic endeavour. In this sense, Chaucer and Boccaccio, Petrarch, Froissart and Ayala were joined in an ideal communion.

Geoffrey Chaucer made a good use of the chances which came his way. He was page to the Duke of Clarence, and married a lady-in-waiting. He fought in France, was a prisoner of war, and received sundry pensions and rewards. At one time he seems to have been out of favour, but, if so, ample compensation was forthcoming from Kings Richard II and Henry IV, and Westminster Abbey received him at the end. French and Latin were as familiar to him as English, and he was the best Italian scholar of his day. He had a thorough knowledge of the Bible, then as now invaluable to style, and a working knowledge of Latin versions of Greek writers. Thus equipped, he took the safe road to literary eminence at that time. He translated *The Consolation of Philosophy* and a part of *The Romance of the Rose* ; and though the latter

<sup>1</sup> *Imaginary Conversations* (Chaucer, Boccaccio, and Petrarch). Despite this finely imagined conversation, it is doubtful if Chaucer met Petrarch.

was completed by other hands, the discipline served as graduation in the art which he was to practise all his life. We must admit that Chaucer began several works which he failed to finish. The *Rose* translation was one. Another was a poem on Genghis Khan, or more probably Kubla Khan, the Grand Khan of the Eastern tale of Marco Polo, a Venetian voyager of the thirteenth century. And if Chaucer thus, in Milton's words—

‘left untold  
The story of Cambuscan bold’,

a more serious loss to English literature is partly a matter of conjecture. It is possible that he had planned to write a complete Troy history in English verse. The theme was rendered attractive by the legendary association of Britain with Brutus, and Lydgate and Caxton were to complete what old Geoffrey of Monmouth had begun. Chaucer contented himself, however, with the single tale of *Troilus and Criseyde*. In his *Knight's Tale*, again, he confined his treatment of the Theban cycle to the limits of Boccaccio's *Teseide*. His *House of Fame* and his *Legend of Fair Women* were likewise incomplete, and the *Canterbury Tales* themselves were designed on a larger scale than they attained.

If any conclusion is to be drawn from this not unusual method of composition, we may say that, consciously or not, Chaucer was casting about for the right medium of expression. If Landor is right, and he was trying to ‘raise poetry under our fogs and merriment among our marshes’, he may well have passed through an apprenticeship to the *Roman de la Rose*, and through a more fertile discipleship to Boccaccio, before he devised the setting of the English countryside, and retold his new-old tales at the merry bidding of the host of the Tabard Inn in Southwark. For Chaucer was not content to be a translator. His

purpose was clear and steady, to assimilate and to transform the story-matters, drawn from all times and places, and to establish them firmly in English poetry. He re-shaped the verse and prose as well as the contents of the tales. His rhyme-royal, of *Troilus and Criseyde* and of parts of the *Canterbury Tales*, is by adoption and absorption an English metre. The stanza consists of seven verses, ten syllables in length, rhyming *ababbc*. It was a variant, of course, of the *ottava rima* founded by Boccaccio on the *canzone* schemes of the singers of Provence and Sicily. But rhyme-royal counts its English masters from Chaucer to William Morris, and chief in mastery is the pioneer. Even more English by use is the rhymed couplet of ~~de~~asyllabic verses, known as heroic verse, first employed in the *Canterbury Tales*. It became England's national measure, second only in importance to the more splendid record of blank verse. Pope used the heroic couplet for his *Iliad*, though Milton's epics were written in blank verse; and, later even than Pope, Keats and other poets preserved and revived Chaucer's metre. They overran the boundary of the couplet, jealously guarded by Pope, and produced a blank verse effect by de-emphasizing the rhymes. But they were Chaucerian metrists in their experiments. Chaucer, by his brilliant skill in the invention of English measures, even more notably by contrast with the alliterative sing-song of *Piers Plowman*, falls into line with Europe's poets as a decoctor of chivalric romance; and he fronts the morning of English literature as the first layman in our history who wrote poetry to serve no other end than the free expression of his own poetic consciousness.

We cannot pause to analyse the *Tales*. April 16, 1387, was the day of the start of the Pilgrimage, and it is a golden date in English fiction. Each pilgrim

was to have told four tales, two going and two returning, and, though the programme was modified to one apiece, even so the allowance was not reached. There were more pilgrims than tales. Still, these run to over seventeen thousand verses, with, additionally, two tales in prose. It were ungrateful to ask for more.

It were even more ungrateful not to observe the vividness and spontaneity which Chaucer, trained as we have seen, brought to the writing of his masterpiece. We think of April as an English month. It was the birth-month of Shakespeare and Wordsworth, the two most characteristic English poets, and its changing tears and laughter are of the very soul of the English climate. The note of opening in April is struck by Chaucer's first verse in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*—

‘ Whan that Aprille with his shoures *sote* (sweet)  
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote ’,

and thereafter we never quit the life and soil of our own country. The universal prieking of the spring is brought home to the gardenland of Kent—

‘ And specially, from every shires ende  
Of Engeland, to Canterbury they wende ’.

Who went that way from Southwark in April, 1387 ? First, the ‘ verray parfit gentil Knight ’, who had lately come back from his voyage, undertaken, as was the wont of worthy knights, for love of

‘ Chivalrye,  
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye ’.

Next, his son, the young squire, ‘ a lover and a lusty bacheler ’, who had been in Flanders, Artois, and Picardy, as many a valiant squire has been since, and who ‘ was as fresh as is the month of May ’. A

prioress, by name Madam Eglantine, whose French was

‘ After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,  
For French of Paris was to hir unknowe ’,

and whose table manners were so elegant withal, that

‘ She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle ’.

Manners made woman then, as now ; for the prioress was ‘ all conscience and tender heart ’, and

‘ so charitable and so pitous,  
She wolde wepe, if that she sawe a mous  
Caught in a trappe ’.

A monk who loved a fat roast swan ; a friar who was an easy man to give penance—

‘ Ther was no man ne-wher so vertuous ;  
He was the beste beggere in his hous ! ’

There was a merchant with his forked beard ; a threadbare clerk of Oxford ; a serjeant of the law, ‘ ware and wise ’ ; a franklin, with his daisy-white beard—

‘ An Haberdassher and a Carpenter,  
A Webbe, a Dyere, and a Tapicer ’ ;

a cook ; a shipman from Dartmouth ; a physician, who

‘ knew the cause of everich maladye,  
Were it of hoot or cold, or moiste, or drye ’ ;

a goodwife of Bath, who ‘ passed them of Ypres and of Ghent ’ in her skill at cloth-making, and had travelled as far as Jerusalem ; a parson, a farmer,

‘ a Reve and a Millere,	(bailiff)
A Somnour and a Pardoner, also	(apparitor)
A Maunciple, and my-self ’.	(college-steward)

Truly a goodly company, assembled to take good cheer before setting out on their pilgrimage to the shrine of the Blessed Martyr at Canterbury. They elected their host to be master of the revels, for,

indeed, 'a fairer burgess is there none in Chepe'; and under his merry and impartial rule the *Canterbury Tales* were told. Not the knight alone was held in honour. Not any one class of pilgrims, but men and women of all kinds and degrees took their parts in this busy, moving picture of Plantagenet England awake. A sly, shrewd tongue, and a keen, kind eye were Chaucer's gifts from the gods, and no man ever put them to better use.

In Book I of his *Troilus and Criseyde* occurs a song (stanzas 58-60) which is directly translated from a sonnet by

## VI. PETRARCH.

'If no love is, O god, what fele I so ?  
And if love is, what thing and whiche is he ?  
If love be good, from whennes comes my wo ?  
If it be wikke, a wonder thinketh me,  
Whenne every torment and adversitee  
That cometh of him, may to me savory thinke ;  
For ay thurst I, the more that I it drinke. . . .

Allas ! what is this wonder maladye ?  
For hete of cold, for cold of hete, I deye '.

Thus, even in Petrarch's lifetime, foreign poets began the practice, which has not ceased at this day, of seeking Petrarch's inspiration for their love-songs. Ronsard in France repaired to him, Boscan in Spain, Wyatt and Surrey in England, and Byron in 1818 wrote of him simply as a lover—

'There is a tomb in Arqua ;—reared in air,  
Pillared in their sarcophagus repose  
The bones of Laura's lover : here repair  
Many familiar with his well-sung woes,  
The Pilgrims of his Genius '.

—*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, IV, 30.

His 'invention is pure love itself', wrote an Elizabethan enthusiast; his 'elocution pure beauty itself. . . . All the noblest Italian, French, and Spanish poets have in their several veins Petrarchized ;



and it is no dishonour for the daintiest or divinest Muse to be his scholar ' <sup>1</sup>.

So Petrarch's name has been associated for nearly six hundred years with the thought of love and Laura. The golden day in his lover's calendar was April 6, 1327, when he saw Laura for the first time ; and she died twenty-one years later, a victim of the plague in Florence. This is all that we need know about her. Her rank as Countess de Sade, the tale of her many children, and her chilly remoteness from the poet, belong to the view expressed by Gibbon—

‘ The merits of the lover I am still less qualified to appreciate : nor am I deeply interested in a metaphysical passion for a nymph so shadowy, that her existence has been questioned ; for a matron so prolific, that she was delivered of eleven legitimate children, while her amorous swain sighed and sung at the fountain of Vaucluse ’ <sup>2</sup>.

But with all respect to the historian, who never shone as a lover, Petrarch's passion for Laura was a real force in the making of lyric verse. They were all in love in the fourteenth century, in love with young love itself in the first May-time of modern lovers, and Francesco Petrarca, or Petrarca, was no exception to the rule. He has even been classed as a Troubadour, and the epithet may be admitted, if we think of the simpler muse of Cino de Pistoja, and not of the complex love-lore of singers in the ‘ sweet, new style ’. The unearthly detachment of the super-lover, if a current phrase may be applied to old songs, lay a little outside Petrarch's range. It was not till after Laura's death that this more unsubstantial strain crept into the music of his worship. Till then,

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel Harvey, in his *Pierces Supercroagation* (1593), quoted by Sir S. Lee, *Life of William Shakespeare*, p. 170, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. 70.

though he had never attempted the frank sensuousness of Boccaccio, he had seldom, if ever, touched the height of Dante's impersonal sublimity. He was in love with the thought of Laura, with her hair which he never touched, her hands which he never clasped, her eyes which he never looked into ; and thus his sonnets and songs were constant models for lovers, suited to their every mood. So, too, the death of Laura was rather a breaking-down of barriers and a summons to love beyond the grave than a severance of mortal bonds—

‘ Ocean and air and earth her dirge should sing  
 To the dull world, without her, which is made  
 A flowerless meadow and a gemless ring.  
 It knew her not while still on earth she stay’d ;  
 I knew her, who in grief yet linger here,  
 And heav’n, who, in my loss, more beauteous doth appear ’.

Laura's death unsealed her lover's lips, and Petrarch's ‘Triumph of Death’, which is one of a series of *Trionfi*, composed in Dante's linked triads, is Laura's splendid memorial and Petrarch's most highly-finished poem.

Petrarch was not only a love-lyrist. In his own estimation, indeed, his Italian love-verse was a negligible product, and he based his expectation of immortality on his activities as a scholar and a patriot. To these aspects of his genius we now come, but too much has been made of the distinction between the lover of Laura and of Italy, and between the scholar and the poet. There was always a confusion in Petrarch's mind between Laura and the laurel, which he prized as the highest reward of learning. And, apart from the play upon a name, so characteristic of the age, his love of Laura, albeit not requited, was but one sign of the individualism, clearly marked in the patriot and the scholar. Two episodes stand out in Petrarch's life, and both are wholly in tune with the personal idealism by which he transformed Laura de Sade. The first was in 1341,

when, after long negotiations, he was crowned Poet Laureate at Rome. The ceremony took place in the Capitol, and was accompanied by ancient Latin rites which had been in abeyance for thirteen hundred years. The second was in 1348, when Rienzi's brief spell of glory as 'the last of the Tribunes' gave Petrarch another opportunity of testifying to the past in the present. For the sake of Rienzi he disowned his former patrons and friends, even flouting the family of the Colonna, to whom he had owed so much. He merged his own ambition in his country's—

'Oh, my Italia ! tho' words are vain  
The mortal wounds to close,  
Unnumbered, that thy beauteous bosom stain,  
Yet it may soothe my pain  
To sigh forth Tiber's woes. . . .  
Ah ! is not this the soil my foot first pressed !  
And here in cradled rest  
Was I not softly hush'd, here fondly rear'd !  
Ah ! is not this my country, so endear'd  
By every filial tie,  
In whose lap shrouded both my parents lie !  
Oh, by this tender thought,  
Your torpid bosoms to compassion wrought,  
Look on the people's grief,  
Who, after God, of you expect relief !  
And, if ye but relent,  
Virtue shall rouse her in embattled might,  
Against blind fury bent,  
Nor long shall doubtful hang th' unequal fight ;  
For no ! the ancient flame  
Is not extinguished yet, that raised Italia's name '.

So enduring was the appeal of this ode that even Machiavelli quoted it at the conclusion of his treatise on *The Prince* ; and in Petrarch's own generation it was irresistible.

The redeemer came to Rome in the guise of Rienzi from the wash-tub, and Petrarch hailed him as *Spirto gentil* ! the heroic liberator of his ancient race. True, when the tribune-adventurer, a Napoleon on a smaller scale, became senator and tyrant, Petrarch as readily recanted and retransferred his allegiance.

But the point is, Petrarch's power of idealism. Those who condemn the coronation and condemn the political vagaries, miss the ardour which consecrated both, and inspired Laura's lover to deathless song.

This belief in a revival of a new Rome worthy of the old, and this sense of individual *virtù* (virtue and manliness in one) which was to build a bridge across the darkened centuries, led Petrarch straight back to Cicero. A basis of philosophic argument for the new ideas springing in Europe was urgently sought by thoughtful minds. In default of it, weeds grew unchecked, hopes withered for lack of solid nourishment, and a dead weight of outworn authority cumbered the toiling earth. To the Italian patriot-poet, Cicero's name and record, and the fame of his yet unrecovered works, were the symbol of release and liberation. So Petrarch spent many long days in stiff climbs to secluded monasteries, searching among dusty parchments, and many laborious nights in deciphering his finds. His chief rewards were the speech *pro Archia* and the letters *ad Atticum* in 1339 and 1345. He wrote, too, original Latin letters, five hundred and fifty-nine in all, and Latin essays on moral philosophy, exalting the joys of learning and the value of the studious life. 'I devoted myself singly, amid a multitude of subjects, to the knowledge of Antiquity', wrote the author of the *Rienzi*-ode and of the *Laura*-poems. 'As I could not live without your Cicero, and could find no one to copy the book, I turned from outward to inward resources, and set my own tired fingers and used-up pen upon the work', he wrote to a citizen of Florence. 'Father supreme of Roman eloquence! Yours are the springs from which we water our meadows; yours the light that shines upon our way', was his apostrophe to 'my Cicero' in another letter. In all history there is nothing quite so virginal as Petrarch's joy in Cicero.

We must try to realize this point of view. The key to the situation is Rome. Marcus Tullius Cicero was a Roman orator, statesman, letter-writer, and philosopher in the first century B.C. More than a millennium had passed, and Rome, the capital of Italy, again urgently required oratory, statesmanship, letters, philosophy. Were not her citizens exiles, her Pope a pawn of the French king, her chief cities divided by faction, her very language a reproach? The intense Roman feeling of Petrarch and his keen sense of oneness with the Latin past made him view the restoration of Cicero as the revelation of an oracle to modern Rome. This attitude did not lack authority. Even before 1300 Cicero had been a name of marvel. He had seduced saints from their orisons. His essay 'on Friendship' had consoled Dante when Beatrice died. His 'Dream of Scipio', as we saw, was a powerful motive in medieval letters.

In this sense, Petrarch was a Humanist, the first of the Humanists, in fact. Humanism, the Revival of Learning, or the New Learning, as it is called, was a revival of much more besides. By its outlook on life it was philosophy; by its origin in Italy it was patriotism; by its sense of form it was beauty; by its freedom of knowledge it was truth. 'Humanism', says a recent writer, 'is the effort of men to think, to feel, and to act for themselves, and to abide by the logic of results'<sup>1</sup>. We may accept the definition for Petrarch. The first man to make this effort, the first modern man, as Renan called him, was the poet-antiquary of Vacluse and Arqua, who died in his library in 1374. He loved learning as a patriot, and Italy as a scholar; and if the Renaissance, as we are told, 'was the work of Cicero's spirit'<sup>2</sup>, then Petrarch ushered in the Renaissance.

<sup>1</sup> G. Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*.

<sup>2</sup> *English Literature and the Classics*. (Oxford Essays.)

There is little to add to this record. Petrarch studied Greek as well as Latin, and there is a touching story of his affection for a Greek manuscript of Homer, which he could never read in the original. His country home made him dependent on the assistance of friends more conveniently placed than himself, and Petrarch went for his Greek to Boccaccio, who had sought him out in 1350. This friendship between the two great Italians resembled in certain features the later friendship between Coleridge and Wordsworth. Boccaccio was *l'un qui aime*, and Petrarch *l'autre qui se laisse aimer*. Only the Humanism of Boccaccio found a way to Petrarch's rarer sympathy; and, mainly to gratify his friend, Boccaccio opened his house in Florence to a Greek fugitive from Calabria, by name Leontius Pilatus, whom he employed to translate the *Iliad* into Latin. Leontius's manner with his patron seems to have resembled Silas Wegg's, at the readings of Gibbon with Mr. Boffin; but he ranks as the first of the wandering scholars who brought Greek culture to the West, and his employer was the first Italian Homeric student.

## VII. CHAUCERIANS AND OTHERS.

We turn from these major writers to some of their successors and disciples.

John Gower (c. 1325-1408) lingers in memory as the 'moral' poet of Chaucer's apostrophe. He was thirteenth-century to the backbone, and was conspicuously lacking in the humour exhibited by Juan Ruiz in Spain and by Chaucer in England. His moral note was struck in *Vox Clamantis* ('The Voice of him who cries'), a Latin poem on human wrongs and divine remedies, akin in scope to the *Vision of Piers Plowman*. His *Miroir d'Omme* was written in



French, and is known in Latin as *Speculum Meditantis*. French, too, were Gower's love-ballads, composed after Provençal models, and his only English work was entitled *Confessio Amantis*. This so-called 'Lover's Confession' took shape as a string of tales, which anticipated by a little the formal setting of Chaucer's masterpiece. Some jealousy is said to have arisen between Chaucer and Gower on this account, but it does not concern us now. A very interesting point about Gower is the evidence he affords to the linguistic versatility required by writers in his time.

John Lydgate (c. 1370-1421) was always content to be known as Chaucer's disciple. He was at his best in unambitious verse, written to please his patron, Humphrey, 'the Good' Duke of Gloucester (1391-1447). Duke Humphrey, the youngest son of King Henry IV, was a *savant* and lover of books, who bequeathed his library to the University of Oxford. Supported by this royal encouragement, Lydgate spent a happy and an industrious life on a middle level of poetic achievement. He wrote a complete 'History of Troy', after the model of Guido delle Colonne; a *Falls of Princes*, on the same lines as Boccaccio's *de Casibus Illustrium Virorum*, and a *Story of Thebes* in continuation of the greater poet's *Canterbury Tales*.

A third follower of Chaucer is mainly memorable for a drawing of the master which he included in his *Governail of Princes*. The writer was Thomas Occleve, or Hoccleve, who died c. 1450.

Stephen Hawes (c. 1470-1524) was a more notable writer, who did as much as any poet before Spenser to promote the Chaucerian principles of prosody and diction. But his invention was wooden and mechanical, and the very titles of his poems, *The Example of Virtue* and *The Pastime of Pleasure*, have been forgotten long since. Still, he wrote one memorable

couplet, which outlives many more ambitious poems, and for which anthologists are always grateful—

‘ For though the day be never so long  
At last the bell ringeth to evensong ’.

Richard Aungerville, commonly known as De Bury after his birthplace at Bury St. Edmunds, served as tutor to the royal prince who became King Edward III. He was on a mission to the Pope at Avignon when he met Petrarch, his contemporary, and the two writers found common interests in scholarship and letters. De Bury founded the library of Trinity (formerly Durham) College, Oxford, which was merged at a later date in the Duke of Gloucester's bequest, and he became successively Bishop of Durham, Lord Chancellor, and High Treasurer. De Bury's eminence as a statesman enabled him to gratify his tastes as connoisseur and bibliophil more fully than Petrarch could contrive in his modest and more secluded circumstances. The tastes were quite genuine, however, and De Bury's Latin *Philobiblon* on the love of and care for books is an attractive and businesslike pamphlet in twenty chapters with a prologue. It was first imprinted in 1473 at Cologne.

The writers in Italy and Spain who continued the vein of the *Decameron* need not detain us long. The best of them was Matteo Bandello (1480-1561), who died as Bishop of Agen, but whose episcopal lawn seems singularly incongruous with the indecency of the tales which he told. His collection, sifted and scoured, yields entertaining reading. Belleforest presented it in French, 1565, and William Painter's English rendering of the French passed into Shakespeare's repertory. The names of Sacchetti and Masaccio also occur in this connection, the former in Florence and the latter in Naples; and we may

legitimately argue from the licentious tone of their *novelle* to the vice and luxury of the courts at which they lived. Our infinite debt to Boccaccio for his invention of the novel-type in letters does not require us to be hospitable to the earliest of his heirs.

Joint heirship to Boccaccio and Juan Ruiz may be claimed by a group of Spanish writers at the court of King John II of Castile. The King's Constable was Alvaro de Luna, his Chaplain Alfonso Martinez de Toledo, his Latin Secretary Juan de Mena, and one of his most prominent courtiers was Inigo Lopez de Mendoza (1398-1458), created Marquis de Santillana. With the high politics of this circle we are not otherwise concerned than to note that Santillana's relations with de Luna, who fell in 1452, introduced a Spanish word into English literature. Santillana wrote a philippic against favourites, entitled *Doctrinal de Privados*, and Lord Bacon, in his essay *Of Friendship*, wrote that 'the modern languages give unto such persons the name of Favorites or Privadoes'. Nor are we much concerned with the books that adorned King John's court. The Constable's 'Beautiful and Virtuous Women' was adapted from Boccaccio's Latin compilation, thus going back to Ovid and the *Rose*. The Chaplain, who used as his pen-name his title of Archpriest of Talavera, reminds us of the Archpriest of Hita in his prose-work on women's frailties, which had a considerable vogue. The Latin Secretary, a kind of Stephen Hawes, wrote a poem, 'The Labyrinth of Fortune', better esteemed for technical qualities than for intrinsic worth. Lastly, in connection with this little group, Santillana patronized poets. He accepted the dedication of an 'Art of Poetry', written by Enrique de Villena, and of poetic versions of the *Aeneid* and *Commedia*, thus introducing Italian models to the Spanish muse. The innovation bore fruit at a later date, when it was gratefully

recalled that Santillana was one of the first Spanish writers to compose sonnets *al Italico modo*.

We conclude the present chapter on that note. The Italian manner was to prevail. Petrarch, the first of the Humanists, spread in Italy and other countries the humanizing grace of his perception, that art is a discipline of life, that fame is worthy of endeavour, and that to serve oneself is also to serve God.

## CHAPTER IV.

1374-1492.

PETRARCH died in 1374. But out of his 'tomb in Arqua' arose a branching tree of life, which critics agree to call Humanism. The charter of Humanism spread. As a Humanist of recent date expresses it : ' The Pagan view was once more proclaimed, that man was made not only to toil and suffer but to enjoy ' <sup>1</sup>.

It was the dayspring of life and love ; the dawn of the Renaissance in modern Europe. Boccaccio felt it in his garden, when he closed the gate against the Plague, and Chaucer drew its brighter air on the road from Southwark to Canterbury. The human franchise of joy was reclaimed from the ' blind mouths ' which had denied it. Some took their joy immoderately, at first greedily sampling the novel licence of the senses, later revelling in filth. Some wore it like a white flower, sweetening sheltered ways, and so won the name of Christian Humanists. Some heard beyond its siren voices a sterner summons to mend and to reform. For then, as always, equal opportunities were shaped by character to diverse acts.

First in time and honour among the

### I. SOWERS OF HUMANISM IN ITALY

were the welcome strangers from the East who followed Leontius Pilatus. Even before 1453, when Constantinople fell to the Turk, though more frequently after that event, these Greek missionaries of

<sup>1</sup> Sir Richard Jebb in the *Cambridge Modern History*, i.

culture brought their wares across the sea to Italy. Rich princes of rival city-states bought their precious merchandise of manuscripts, and poor scholars saved every penny to buy their dictionaries and grammars. We speak of the freedom of learning, and count the steps of its advance ; but few, if any, remember the immense, incalculable debt which we owe to its pioneers in Europe. The heirs of Budé and Erasmus, to whose names we are coming in due course, forget that the path of the Renaissance was prepared by votaries of culture, whose keenness, zeal, and enthusiasm put all later records in the shade. Petrarch, the ardent Ciceronian, knew, as we saw, no Greek. He was shut out of his spiritual home for want of a common Greek-Italian lexicon, such as his countrymen may buy for a couple of *lire* to-day. We are all Hellenists nowadays. We all have a smattering of the scholarship which Petrarch painfully acquired from Latin versions imperfectly rendered from imperfectly deciphered Greek texts. 'Meanwhile, who fished the murex up?' Who taught Greek to the teachers of Europe? Common piety demands that we should not pass over the dead names.

The dead names and the spent enthusiasm. For the reception of these strangers from the East is a remarkable episode in the history of civilization in the West. The eagerness for knowledge among peoples who had not yet discovered the New World, and to whom the New Learning was still a sealed book, is a fact which fires the imagination and stirs the blood of sated men. It can never recur, that experience. It lies away back in the fifteenth century, buried deep with evils that have been cured and with conditions which we would not see repeated. But those golden moments in the Italian city-states irradiate all the darker hours.



We set in parallel rolls of honour nine names of teachers and of taught—

*Greek Teachers.*

1. Manuel Chrysoloras.
2. George of Trebizond.
3. Theodorus Gaza.
4. Gregorio Tifernas.
5. Joannes Argyropoulos.
6. Demetrios Chalcondyles.
7. Bessarion.
8. Georgios Gemistos (Pletho).
9. Maxim.

*Italian Pupils.*

1. Coluccio Salutati (1330-1406).
2. Giovanni di Conversino (1347-1406).
3. Niccolo de Niccoli (1363-1437).
4. Giovanni Aurispa (1369-1459).
5. Lionardo Bruni (1369-1444).
6. Piero Vergerio (c. 1370-c. 1445).
7. Uberto Decembrio (1370-1427).
8. Guarino of Verona (1374-1460).
9. Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459).

A few notes may be appended to each roll.

In the Greek column: (1) Chrysoloras arrived at Venice in 1393 as an envoy from Constantinople to solicit help against the Turks. He was induced to stay in Italy by even more urgent solicitations on behalf of the cause of humane learning. His lectures at Pavia were attended by many youthful Italians aflame with the new Hellenism, and his acceptance of a chair at Florence 'secured the future of Greek erudition in Europe'<sup>1</sup>. His *Erotemata*, a Greek grammar, was printed in 1484. (3) Gaza's Greek grammar was used by Budé and Erasmus, and is thus the truly-laid corner-stone of Hellenic culture in the West. He died in 1475. (5) Argyropoulos lectured in Rome, and counted Johann Reuchlin among his pupils. Reuchlin was so diligent a student that his tutor sped him back to Germany with the brilliant testimonial: *Ecce, Græcia nostro exsilio transvolavit Alpes*: 'Lo! Greece by our exile has flown across the Alps'. Let us bear the saying in mind. We shall return in a later section to this young German missionary of culture, who carried Hellenism northwards, and helped to shape the course of civilization. (6) Chalcondyles lectured at Padua and Florence, where he published, 1488, the *editio princeps* of the Greek text of Homer, more than a hundred years after Petrarch's death. (7) Bessarion (1403-72) was

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Symonds, *op. cit.*

Greek Archbishop of Nicæa, before Pope Eugenius IV created him a Cardinal at Rome. His Roman palace offered a welcome for his countrymen fleeing from Constantinople, and it became the home of the famous library, now housed at St. Mark's in Venice. Bessarion took a leading part in the dreary controversy of the day which raged (for scholars were irascible, and invective was an art in itself) round the respective claims of Aristotle and Plato, and it is refreshing to be assured by a modern scholar that 'throughout all the tangles of this complicated controversy a thread of gold is inwoven by the serene and imperturbable temper of the great patron of the Greeks in Italy, the Cardinal Bessarion' <sup>1</sup>. (8) Even rarer personal magnetism distinguished Gemistos, a Byzantine, who was eighty-three years of age when he came in 1439 to the Council of Florence. There he left theology to the theologians. 'Instead of attending the Council', we are told, 'he poured forth his Platonic lore, and uttered dark sentences to a circle of eager Florentines' <sup>2</sup>. The Platonic Academy at Florence was founded in the first flush of this ecstacy, and the grand old scholar indulged his admirers by using the Greek name Pletho, equivalent to and in lieu of Gemistos, for the sake of its likeness to Plato, whose foremost exponent he became. A Greek work entitled 'The Laws' is Pletho's chief contribution to literature apart from the contagion of his example as a Hellenist in Florence, where he died in 1450. (9) Maxim sowed his precious seeds in the colder regions of Muscovy. He reached Moscow in 1518, after a long sojourn with the Florentines. There he helped to found schools, to introduce the new art of printing, and to encourage the few and timid scholars who dared to gather to his standard. Unfortunately, late

<sup>1</sup> Sir J. E. Sandys, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Creighton, *History of the Papacy*.

as he was, Maxim arrived before his time. ' We kiss your chains, as if they were a Saint's ', he was told by the Patriarch of the Moscow Church ; but he wore the chains for thirty years, and is honourably accounted the first martyr of learning in Russia.

Turning next to the column of Italian names, we find the ability to teach matched by a readiness to learn. (4) Aurispa, for example, a rich Sicilian, was tireless in collecting manuscripts, and is said to have rescued two hundred and thirty-eight from Constantinople for Florence ; these are now housed in the Laurentian Library. (8) Guarino opened a school, which he established finally at Verona. His son wrote a treatise on its methods which forms a valuable document of humanistic education. (1) Salutati, (2) Conversino, and (3) Niccoli were all members of the Santo Spirito, a modest academy of learning which preceded the Platonic Academy. They walked in their fathers' ways. Conversino had been Petrarch's secretary. Salutati had edited Petrarch's *Africa*, the Latin epic which he had nursed through many years, but never published in his lifetime. Niccoli, another grand old Florentine, recruited younger men to learning, and inspired them, we are told, like a new Socrates in a new Athens. (5) Bruni, (6) Vergerio, and (7) Decembrio were all pupils of Chrysoloras : Bruni, perhaps, the most eminent. He rose from a humble origin to the rank of Chancellor of the Republic, and his monument in Sta. Croce declares, ' History mourns, Eloquence is mute '. (9) Poggio trod in less tranquil ways. He was attached to the Papal Court, and earned his pay from the Pope by his brilliant talent for learned controversy. He is alleged on contemporary evidence to have ' displayed such vehemence that the whole world was afraid of him ', but his exhibition of frightfulness does not stay the world to-day. Nor is posterity much better

impressed by the spectacle of Poggio at ease. His Latin volume of *Facetiae* ('Diversions'), a collection of ribald tales, as scurrilous as they were indecent, was directed against frocked hypocrisy. That they were read by Pope Nicholas V without prejudice to Poggio's preferment is a somewhat illuminating fact. More worthy of esteem among the Humanists was Poggio, the book-lover and scholar, as diligent almost as Petrarch in ransacking monasteries for manuscripts. Poggio had the good fortune to find Quintilian's *Institutio Oratorica* in the convent of St. Gallen, 'covered with dust', as he announced, 'and filthy with neglect'. He continued the Florentine history which won Bruni his epitaph, and composed an elegant dialogue (the epithet is Gibbon's) on 'The Fickleness of Fortune'.

It would be pleasant to linger in this circle, and to re-people Florence in imagination with the learned men and the learners who saw the fourteenth century out. They came such a little while after Petrarch, and yet they possessed so much of what he had ardently desired. We might sort them into groups, and call Poggio a Pagan Humanist, Niccoli a Christian Humanist, and Lorenzo Valla (1407-57), to whom we shall come, a forerunner of the Humanists of the Reformation. But in these earlier days of learning no exact classification is appropriate. They formed a society of scholars, all eager to teach and to learn, and the very fact of their intercourse, with new ideas to exchange and ready means for exchanging them, points the contrast between the new social age and the solitary manhood of Petrarch, alone in his library or on his journeys or with his imaginary letters to the dead. The lonely man's passion for learning, his intense ambition to re-acquire in the Italy of his own day and generation the Latin culture of the past, had become the fashion of academies and schools in

the leading Italian city-states. It went out from Italy with immense force. To the impetus lent by the Greeks who had brought their wares from Constantinople was added the new verse and prose contributed by their pupils in Italy. And over all was spread the canopy of the brilliant Medicean Court.

We shall come in a moment to that Court. Meanwhile, it is proper to ask : What was the ultimate aim of all this business with dead books ? Why was *Salutati* not ashamed to be known as ‘ *Cicero’s* ape ’ ? Why were the banquets on *Plato’s* birthday celebrated with almost religious rites in the new Florentine Academy ? Why was it worth while for Popes to hire assassins as champions of *Plato* or of *Aristotle* ? Why was *Niccoli’s* influence on young pleasure-seekers acclaimed with the joy as at a conversion ? The New Learning, let us never forget, for we, after all, are its beneficiaries, was always a means to a further end. Take it up where we will, it was the same story. They were all schoolmasters of the spirit. As *Ciriaco*, the antiquary, expressed it, they went to awaken the dead. Deep in Italy’s dead language lay the folded forms of living speech ; deep in Italy’s dead history lay the noble models of living statecraft, and deep in Italy’s dead liberties lay the splendid promise of living freedom. With a passionate, patriotic faith, they sought from *Virgil*, as *Tennyson* took from *Wordsworth*, a

‘ laurel greener from the brow  
Of him who uttered nothing base ’.

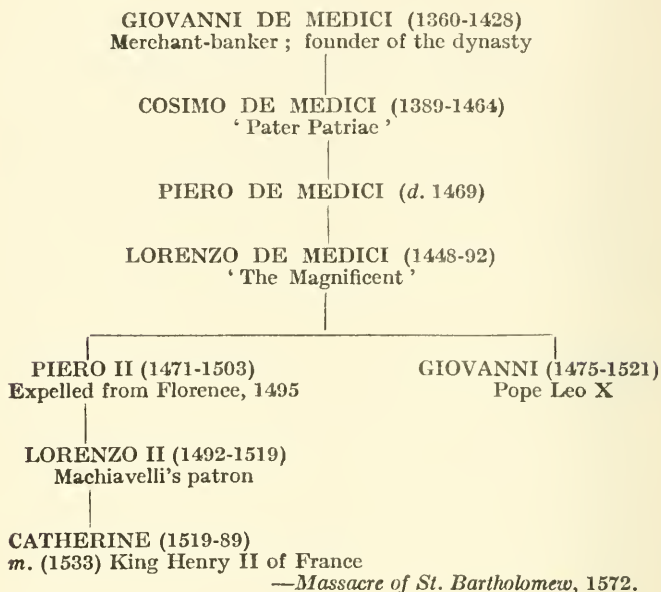
It could not fade, this laurel-wreath of Italy. It typified the glory that had been, and it served as a perpetual reminder of a new glory still to be—

‘ che l’antico valore  
Negli Italiani cuor non è ancor morto ’ ;

for (as *Petrarch* had written) the ancient valour of the Italian heart is not yet dead.

So we come to the house of the Medici, without whom the Italian Renaissance might have been of much slower growth.

The family-tree is as follows—



Three names stand out most conspicuously : Lorenzo ; his son, the Pope ; and his great-grand-daughter, the Queen-Mother of France ; verily a remarkable issue from a banker's parlour in Florence.

It was Cosimo de Medici, son of the founder of the house, who made the encouragement of Humanism a part of the policy of the Republic. Cosimo was so much enthralled by Pletho's eloquence at the Council of 1439, that he founded the Platonic Academy in succession to the old Santo Spirito. His choice of first president of the Academy fell on Marsilio Ficino (1433-99), whose Introduction to Plato's *Symposium*



preserves an attractive account of the annual dinners held in honour of the Master. Another of Cosimo's endowments was the great library known as the Medicean; and the title 'Father of the Fatherland', accorded to him in 1464, shows how powerfully he had extended the shrewdly laid fortunes of his family.

Cosimo's grandson, Lorenzo the Magnificent, confirmed and completed the structure. Lorenzo's *Life* has been written by an English scholar, William Roscoe (1753-1831), and his pleasant pages should be consulted for the roll of illustrious men who were proud to throng Lorenzo's Court. They brought to it art and learning in profuse variety of taste, and they found in the prince at its head a genius responsive and provocative, commanding a bottomless exchequer, endless occasions for pageantry, and a retinue of copyists and secretaries. No happier combination could be devised for the fulfilment of the hopes of the Humanists; and Italian literature, as it was reformed out of the broken dreams of Petrarch, owes its renaissance, its new birth, to Lorenzo. By precept even more than by example, and with genuinely statesmanlike sagacity, this Florentine son of Latin Italy sought to fit to modern uses the forms of the old mother-tongue. By encouraging scholars to display their mastery of classic form and diction in carnival songs, dramatic interludes, and light verses of satire or love, all composed in the native Tuscan speech, and adapted to the taste of the populace, Lorenzo de Medici broke down the last barriers remaining between the two greatest epochs of the Latin race, Pagan Rome and Humanistic Italy. In his reign, so justly termed magnificent, and largely by his personal efforts as a poet and a patron of poets, the seeds of Greek and Latin culture, sown by the scholars and the Humanists, were raised in his own

Florence and beyond it to the fine flower of Italian literature.

So we come to

## II. THE FIRST LITERARY HARVEST.

They were bi-lingual in those days. Cicero's sedulous apes did not readily forgo their practice of Cicero's tongue. They argued in Latin, they reasoned in Latin, they taught in Latin ; but, gradually, Lorenzo the Magnificent, ably backed by his courtiers and associates, accustomed the literate world to sing in the soft Italian speech. The line between Latin and Italian was never very closely drawn ; the point was that Lorenzo's example, building on Dante and Petrarch, restored the cultivation of the native language which the first zeal of classical study had interrupted.

We must not pause at Lorenzo's own poems. His biographer makes the most of them, especially praising his sonnets, and appropriately remarks that he stimulated

‘ his countrymen to the pursuit of literature. The restorer of the lyric poetry of Italy, the promoter of the dramatic, the founder of the satiric, rustic, and other modes of composition, he is not merely entitled to the rank of a poet, but may justly be placed among the distinguished few, who, by native strength, have made their way through paths before untrodden ’<sup>1</sup>.

This considered judgment may stand for the verdict of posterity. But the brilliance of Lorenzo in his own day outshone such sober estimates, and we cite, like-

<sup>1</sup> W. Roscoe, *op. cit.*, chap. v.

wise from Roscoe's pages, a translation of a portion of a Latin eulogy written by

ANGELO AMBROGINI POLIZIANO (1454-94),

commonly known as Politian. Politian served as tutor to the Medici children, and proved a valuable supporter of the literary policy of the court. His works included a Latin version of *Iliad*, Books I-V (how much Petrarch would have enjoyed it !), which earned him Ficino's praises as 'Homericus juvenis'. More famous, and readable still, are the Latin verse-declamations which he wrote to set off his lectures on ancient and modern literature ; and we can readily conceive the enthusiasm of his pupils, who included Grocyn, Linacre, and Reuchlin, at the music of these rolling hexameters. Four such poems by Politian survive, on Virgil, Hesiod, Homer, and *Nutricia* (1486), or the modern poetry which had nurtured him. The last closed with the eloquent panegyric on his patron, Lorenzo de Medici, rendered by Roscoe in heroic couplets—

' And thou, Lorenzo, rushing forth to fame,  
Support of Cosmo's and of Piero's name !  
Safe in whose shadow Arno hears from far,  
And smiles to hear, the thunder of the war ;  
Endowed with arts the listening throng to move,  
The senate's wonder, and the people's love,  
Chief of the tuneful train ! thy praises hear,  
If praise of mine can charm thy cultured ear. . . .  
But who shall all thy varying strains disclose,  
As sportive fancy prompts, or passion glows ?  
When to thine aid thou call'st the solar beams,  
And all their dazzling lustre round thee flames ;  
Or sing'st of Clytie, sunward still inclined ;  
Or the dear nymph, whose image fills thy mind ;  
Or dreams of love, and love's extremest joy ;  
Or vows of truth, and endless constancy ; . . .  
These the delights thy happiest moments share,  
Thy dearest lenitive of public care ;  
Blest in thy genius, thy capacious mind—  
Not to one science, nor one theme, confined—  
By grateful interchange fatigue beguiles,  
In private studies and in public toils'.

On the whole, no ruler in history has better deserved such high praise.

Politian's Italian poetry included a fashionable celebration of the 'Joust' (*Giostra*) led by Giugliano de Medici, Lorenzo's younger brother. It was written in the octave stanzas which were Boccaccio's favourite metre. The tournament seems to have occurred when Politian was fourteen years old (1468), but the poem is hardly to be dated prior to 1476. The novel spectacle and the youthful prince tempted Politian to indulge in languorous stanzas of romance, full of promise for the future of Italian poetry; and in the *Giostra*, and even more in his *Orfeo*, an operatic play on the Ovidian Orpheus, Politian helped to build a bridge between Petrarch and Boccaccio on the one side, and Ariosto and Tasso on the other.

One specimen of his muse may be given, for we have the advantage of quoting it from a version by Addington Symonds—

' White is the maid, and white the robe around her,  
With buds and roses and thin grasses pied;  
Enwreathed folds of golden tresses crowned her,  
Shadowing her forehead fair with modest pride:  
The wild wood smiled; the thicket, where he found her,  
To ease his anguish, bloomed on every side:  
Serene she sits, with gesture queenly mild,  
And with her brow tempers the tempest wild. . . .

Reclined he found her on the swarded grass  
In jocund mood; and garlands she had made  
Of every flower that in the meadow was,  
Or on her robe of many hues displayed;  
But when she saw the youth before her pass,  
Raising her timid head awhile she stayed;  
Then with her white hand gathered up her dress,  
And stood, lap full of flowers, in loveliness'.

Truly, as the translator says, 'all the defined idealism, the sweetness and the purity of Tuscan portraiture are in these stanzas' <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Symonds, *op. cit.*

The poems of

BATTISTA SPAGNUOLI (1448-1516),

commonly known as Mantuan after his birthplace Mantua, are chiefly interesting to modern readers because they formed one of the few Tudor school-books used by Shakespeare at Stratford-on-Avon. Spagnuoli's inspiration, like his name, was derived from Virgil, the greater Mantuan. A general of the Carmelite order, he employed no other tongue save Latin, and his pastoral eclogues in that language acquired an extraordinary vogue. These it was which were used as a reading-book, and Holofernes, in *Love's Labour Lost* (IV, ii), quoted their opening verse—

*'Fauste, precor gelida quando pecus omne sub umbra  
Ruminat,—*

and so forth. Ah, good old Mantuan! . . . Who understandeth thee not, loves thee not'.

The Tudor version of Mantuan was effected by George Turberville, whose graceful imagery and diction are clearly to be traced in Edmund Spenser and other English poets.

More intimately of Lorenzo's circle, and more akin in talent to Politian, was

LUIGI PULCI (1432-84),

a member of a cultured family, and a direct forerunner of poets greater than himself. What was missing till now is originality. In the manifold literary activity of the Latin-Italian Humanists, who had sat at the feet of the Greek exiles, the nearest approach to a novel theme, or to novel treatment of an old theme, had been reached by Politian in his

*Giostra*. There he turned the occasion of a civic tournament into a discursive idyl, and connected his mythological researches with the tastes for Diana and Venus of the youthful Julian de Medici. The next step was fairly obvious, and Pulci took it in a stride which crossed the dividing-line between poetic experiment and poetry. The purpose of the Florentine writers (we have remarked it before) was to make their native tongue capable of the literary demands imposed by Latin style and diction. Hitherto, and hardly excepting Politian, this aim had been achieved in occasional songs and stanzas, and in poems with more form than body. But the proof of literature is the book; and the first true book of Italian verse, since the recent dawn of the New Learning, was Luigi Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore*, with which he delighted Lorenzo and the Court.

Pulci aimed at permanent delight. Thus aiming, he took leave to ignore any intermediate object dear to Humanists in Florence. He was a poet, not an amateur of poetry. 'Where shall I find Luigi Pulci?' asked Lorenzo de Medici in one of his poems; and the reply came promptly—

' Oh, in the wood there. Gone, depend upon it,  
To vent some fancy of his brain—some whim  
That will not let him rest till it's a sonnet ' <sup>1</sup>.

And Pulci himself confessed, with a shrewd hit at the Platonic Academy—

' Erewhile my Academe and my Gymnasia  
Were in the solitary woods I love,  
Whence I can see at will Afric or Asia ;  
There nymphs with baskets tripping through the grove  
Shower jonquils at my feet or colocasia :  
Far from the town's vexations there I'd rove,  
Haunting no more your Areopagi,  
Where folk delight in calumny and lie ' <sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Translated by Leigh Hunt.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by Addington Symonds.



For Pulci was a poet, first and last. He took nothing seriously except his art; least of all the pretensions of the Hellenists or the piety of the theologians. His *Morgante* (*maggiore* means simply 'longer', and implies that the poem had been written in two instalments) is a romance of Roland, whose *chanson de geste* we examined in the heroic cycle of Charlemagne. The treachery of Gano at Roncesvalles and the rout of Count Roland in the pass had never been wholly dropped out of the repertoires of street-minstrels; and a dull compilation in prose, known as the *Reali de Francia*, saved Pulci all the trouble of research. He employed the epic octave stanza, already nationalized by Boccaccio; and, thus equipped with a hero and a metre, the two essentials of subject and form, Pulci's genius broke away from the tentative poetizing of his contemporaries. He reinvented Roland as Orlando; he invented Morgante, a giant, captured and converted in the first canto, to aid and adorn the knight's prowess; he added Margutte, a second giant, as an unredeemed foil to the first; he introduced Malagigi, the magician, and Astarotte, the devil, to relieve the gloom of Dante's hell; he reduced the stature of Charlemagne, increasing his credulousness with his beard; and, through all, he sought deliberately to entertain rather than to instruct. The prevailing note of *Morgante* is its humour, tending sometimes to satire and burlesque. Pulci could rise in places to the height of the old, tragic theme of honour triumphant over death, in the valley of the shadow at Roncesvalles. But chiefly his purpose was set, to make an agreeable tale for the amusement of the Medicean court, and to preserve in all sections of his romance the unity of its artistic aim. Pulci, like Tennyson after him, in however different a sphere, deprecated the standard of 'a larger lay'. In the

admirable version of Addington Symonds, he warns us—

‘ I ask not for that wreath of bay or laurel  
Which on Greek brows or Roman proudly shone :  
With this plain quill and style I do not quarrel,  
Nor have I sought to sing of Helicon :  
My Pegasus is but a rustic sorrel ;  
Untutored mid the groves I still pipe on :  
Leave me to chat with Corydon and Thrysis ;  
I’m no good shepherd, and can’t mend my verses. . . .

‘ A nobler bard shall rise and win the payment  
Fame showers on loftier styles and worthier lays :  
While I mid beechwoods and plain herdsmen dwell,  
Who love the rural muse of Pulci well ’.

We must forgo the pleasure of illustration, for we shall meet Count Orlando again in the romance-epics of later Italian poets. But we may note that Pulci’s modest prophecy was fulfilled in all its parts. The ‘nobler bard’ arose in Ariosto, and he won the rewards of fame. Yet in Pulci’s honour be it noted, too, that an Italian critic assures us: ‘You will adore Ariosto, you will admire Tasso, but you will love Pulci’.

When we reach in a later chapter of this history the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto, we shall find that its splendid success depended far less on Pulci’s *Morgante* than on the contemporary *Orlando Innamorato* of

#### MATTEO MARIA BOIARDO (1434-94).

Indeed, it is a proof of that dependence, that Pulci’s poem is still remembered, while Boiardo’s is forgotten and submerged, despite its popular revision by Francesco Berni (1497-1535). This submersion was due, be it stated, to the excellence of Ariosto much more than to Boiardo’s defects. All Boiardo’s advantages were repeated in a higher degree by Ariosto, who possessed the supreme advantage of all, of finding ready to his hand the poem which Boiardo had left unfinished at Book III, canto ix. *Securus judicat*

*orbis terrarum*: the merit of Ariosto's *Orlando* is attested by the judgment of the world; but in fairness to the elder writer, whom he succeeded and surpassed, we may quote the opinions of Hallam and of Symonds. 'In point of novel invention and just keeping of character, especially the latter', says Hallam, 'Pulci has not been surpassed by his illustrious follower'. 'Without the *Innamorato*', says Symonds, 'the *Furioso* is meaningless. The handling and structure of the romance, the characters of the heroes and heroines, the conception of Love and Arms as the double theme of romantic poetry, the interpolation of *novelle* in the manner of Boccaccio, and the magic machinery by which the plot is conducted, are due to the originality of Boiardo. . . . Did he so contrive that the contemporary repute of the *Innamorato* should serve to float his *Furioso* and then be forgotten by posterity? If so, he calculated wisely'.

One advantage of Boiardo over Pulci was his distance from the Medicean Court. Pulci, as we saw, was inclined to laugh at the earnestness of the academicians, and Boiardo, Count of Scandiano, a Ferrarese nobleman by descent, and Governor of Reggio and Modena, was even further removed by birth and association from the professional Florentine *savants*. The glamour of chivalry was in his blood, and his acquaintance with romantic conditions was hereditary rather than acquired.

'Such forces met not, nor so wide a camp,  
When Agrican, with all his northern powers,  
Besieged Albracca, as romances tell,  
The city of Gallaphrone, from thence to win  
The fairest of her sex, Angelica,  
His daughter, sought by many prowrest knights,  
Both Paynim and the peers of Charlemain'.

So Milton wrote in *Paradise Regained* (III, 338) and the first of the 'romances' he referred to is Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*. Thus, though it is agreed that

the inventor of Orlando's love for Angelica was far behind Ariosto in softness of sentiment and diction, yet Boiardo's success can scarcely be exaggerated. To a medieval theme he married the style of classical poetry, revealing in the Italian language powers and beauties unsuspected before—

' Far more than health, far more than strength is worth,  
Nay, more than pleasure, more than honour vain,  
Is friendship tried alike in dole and mirth :  
For when one love doth join the hearts of twain,  
Their woes are halved, their joys give double birth  
To joy, by interchange of grief and pain ;  
And when doubts rise, with free and open heart  
Each calls his friend, who gladly bears a part.

' What profit is there in much pearls and gold,  
Or power, or proud estate, or royal reign ?  
Lacking a friend mere wealth is frosty gold :  
He who loves not, and is not loved again,  
From him true joys their perfect grace withhold :  
And this I say, since now across the main  
Brave Brandimarte drives his flying ship  
To help Orlando, drawn by comradeship '.

—*Orlando Innamorato*, III, vii <sup>1</sup>.

If the spirit of ancient Rome were to be renewed in Cicero's descendants, they should find in Boiardo's epic-romance a poem of the new time not unworthy of the old. So the New Learning fathered a new literature.

The epic was not the only form to which men of letters paid their homage. Modern drama, harnessed to the car of Lorenzo de Medici's Carnivals, was to be tried by the ordeal of the theatre ; and, shortly before his death, Boiardo produced a play on the subject (afterwards Shakespearean) of *Timon*, the misanthrope of Athens. Written in Dante's linked triplets, and enacted on a stage in two tiers, the higher accommodating the deities and the lower the earth-born characters, *Timone* is chiefly interesting as a stepping-stone from the morality-play to comedy. It has all the familiar features of moral discourse and abstract

<sup>1</sup> Translated by Addington Symonds.

personages ; and, though notable historically, its dramatic value is *nil*.

More intrinsic excellence may be affirmed of a work in another branch of letters. To the prose-fiction of Boccaccio and the epic-romance of Boiardo, which were both to prove so fruitful, we may add the pastoral-idyl, now first invented in modern literature by

JACOPO SANNAZZARO (1458-1530).

Sir Philip Sidney, writing in 1595 of Edmund Spenser's recent *Shepherd's Calendar*, declared that it had

‘ much Poetry in its Eclogues ; indeed worthy the reading if I be not deceived. That same framing of its style to an old rustic language I dare not allow, since neither Theocritus in Greek, Virgil in Latin, nor Sanazar in Italian did affect it ’.

But Sidney was a member of an Arcopagus, or literary clique, even more rigid in its purism than that which Pulci had derided ; and Spenser's fame has never suffered by Sidney's academic prohibitions. What is more to the point in this quotation is the joining of Sannazzaro with Theocritus and Virgil as a pastoral writer of equal honour ; and we learn without surprise that Sannazzaro, born in Naples (*Parthenope*), where Virgil's ashes were laid, was always a devout Virgilian. After two experiments in Latin verse, ‘ On the Birth of the Virgin ’ and ‘ Piscatorial Eclogues ’, he recalled the rural muse to Italy in his *Arcadia*, 1504. This first of literary Arcadias had fifty-nine editions in its own century. It was translated and imitated outside Italy, and it forged a second and much stronger link in the chain begun by Boccaccio's *Ameto* between Theocritus in

antiquity and Montemayor, Cervantes, and Sidney in Portugal, Spain, and England. Even Rousseau's 'return to Nature' and such a poem as Wordsworth's *Michael* trace descent through Sannazzaro.

What was this literary Arcady? The Arcadia of geographical fact was the Switzerland of Greece, and its race of hardy mountaineers were alternately laughed at for their rusticity and envied for their simplicity. Thus, Greek poets referred to Arcadia as the realm of pastoral innocence and of bucolic happiness. Gods haunted its hills, and music murmured through its groves. The 'happy melodist' of Keats, 'for ever piping songs for ever new', goes straight back through Sidney's 'shepherd boy, piping as though he should never be old' to the groves of this fabled happy land, which Theocritus handed on to Virgil, and Sannazzaro took over from both. *Arcades ambo* were Thyrsis and Corydon in the fourth line of Virgil's seventh Eclogue, and they entered modern literature under that name. The New Learning adopted Arcadia, and passed it on to the uses of the new literature, as the present ideal of bliss; and Virgil, Dante's guide in hell, and Boiardo's model for romance-epic, became Sannazzaro's touchstone for excellence in the pastoral style. The muses of Sicily, invoked in the first verse of Virgil's fourth Eclogue, were the muses of modern Italy as of ancient Rome, and their revelation of the golden age,

'Magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo',

was greeted as an oracle of the Renaissance by the ardent sons of Italian Humanists.

It was on a corner of that world of gold that Sannazzaro lifted the veil when he wrote his *Arcadia* in Naples. He repaired to a courtiers' country, a country garnished and swept, with no noise or dust from the stricken fields where Piers Plowman had



driven his team and Jacques Bonhomme had lighted his fires. In that land of imaginary borders, where, in the last words of Sannazzaro's prose-poem, a man might 'live without envy of another's greatness in modest contentment with his lot', lovers disported as nymphs and swains, and innocence had not learned to blush at the manners of sophisticated society. There never were such shepherds and shepherdesses, such alternations of bright sun and bosky shade, such artless ambuscades of love, such white and woolly fleeces, such ribboned crooks and dulcet pipes, as Arcadian writers depict to us. The type was artificial from the start, and, though a meretricious interest was sometimes added to it by allusions to prominent persons in real life under pastoral disguises, it became more insipid as time went on. Greater writers than Sannazzaro continued his new-old design, but his *Arcadia* of 1504 stands at the head of a branch of letters which owed its revival in modern Europe to the exemplars explored by Italian Humanists, and which still gratifies an illusion, as old, and as young, as man himself. Sannazzaro might have said with his master, in the last verses of the fourth Georgic—

' Illo Virgilium me tempore dulcis alebat  
Parthenope, studiis florentem ignobilis oti,  
Carmina qui lusi pastorum, audaxque juvena,  
Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi ' <sup>1</sup>.

So the seeds were sown, and the harvest was reaped, and sowers and reapers alike were laid in the fields which they had tilled. 'Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath'; and it happened to the Humanists of Italy that a sudden term was set to the

<sup>1</sup> Time was when, in sweet Naples foster'd, I,  
Treading the flowery ways of learned ease,  
Play'd shepherds' songs, and sang, O saucy youth,  
Thee, Tityrus, beneath thy beechen shade.

labours which they loved. Alfieri (1749-1803), a great Italian writer, in a striking and memorable phrase, called the fifteenth century *sgrammaticava*, a solecism ; and its notable departure in Italian literature from all wonted standards of composition was pointed by the manner of its end. Guided by Petrarch into the ways of classical Latinity, which were likewise the ways of re-animate patriotism, Petrarch's countrymen in Florence, at the court of Lorenzo the Magnificent, sought to conquer in one assault the forms of Cicero and Virgil and the matters of modern romance. How far they succeeded we have marked, in the epical experiments of Pulci and Boiardo, in Politian's and Lorenzo's lyric stanzas, and in the pastoral *Arcadia* of Sannazzaro. Always they feared the failure, not of their springs of inspiration, but of their tether of authority. Not 'is this true?' but 'is this permissible?' was the constant preoccupation of conscious stylists ; and the Greek rule persisted, we noted, right down to the era of Sir Philip Sidney, who 'dare not allow' Edmund Spenser to break the conventions of Theocritus. Later chapters will show more clearly how fruitful and formidable at once was the classical tradition in modern literature. Here we are more concerned to note the sudden end of the *quattrocentiste* (the fifteenth-century men) in Italy. Political causes which we need not examine, and which are linked with Italian history from the time of Dante and before it, led to the unopposed entry into Florence on November 17, 1494, of the invader, King Charles VIII of France. That date, which began a new age, closed the solecistic experiments in Italian literature. Lorenzo de Medici had died in 1492 ; Luigi Pulci in 1484 ; Ficino died in 1499 ; Politian and Boiardo in 1494 itself ; and in the same year, on the very day of the French king's entry into Florence, died

## GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA,

a young Florentine of rare gifts and promise. He was just over thirty years of age, and by all contemporary records he combined intellectual talents and the purest moral force with physical beauty and rare personal fascination. Ficino's address of welcome to him, when he was elected to the Platonic Academy, is among the most graceful memorials of the Humanistic era. Remarkable in his own lifetime, he vividly impressed later Humanists, from Sir Thomas More in the sixteenth to Walter Pater in the nineteenth century.

Mirandola's mind had a deeply mystic tinge. Always at the back of his thoughts, inspiring and unifying his studies, was the Schoolmen's medieval dream, how to reconcile Christ with Plato in a single synthesis of revelation. He studied Hebrew as well as Greek, and his influence on his fellow-student, Reuchlin, then a favourite pupil of Argyropoulos, later the leading Hebraist in the North, gave the impulse to that criticism of the text of the Old Testament which bore such bitter fruit in the Reformation. But nothing so harsh as textual criticism clouded Mirandola's musings. These were all vision and speculation, at the back of the hinterland of thought; the dissolving views of an Italian scholar in the 'impossible' fifteenth century. 'It is because his life is so perfect a parallel to the attempt made in his writings to reconcile Christianity with the ideas of Paganism, that Pico', Pater tells us, 'in spite of the scholastic character of these writings, is so interesting'. There we must leave him to his dreams, between the types of Paganism and Christianity which adorned his unique generation: Lorenzo de Medici and Savonarola.

More direct in ascent to the Reformers who changed the religious map of Europe was

LORENZO VALLA (1407-57).

He left Italy at the age of twenty-eight for the Court of King Alfonso of Aragon, and from the safer vantage-ground of Naples he launched the first shafts of the New Criticism. Already he had published in Latin a Ciceronian dialogue 'on Pleasure' (*de Voluptate*, 1431) which recalls by its title and contents the remark quoted at the opening of the present chapter, that Humanism meant a renewal of the old Pagan view: 'man was meant not only to suffer but to enjoy'. Petrarch would have appreciated that point of view, and would have rejoiced at Valla's Latinity; but one wonders if Petrarch would have discerned the danger to peace and to authority which lurked in the riches of the dialogue. 'What Nature has formed and created cannot but be holy and admirable'. Excellent doctrine, no doubt, and a very valuable perception, at the dawn of the age of discovery in physical and geographical science. But what of Nature's vested interpreters in the schools and churches of the day? What of the 'holy' by authority, which chastened the 'holy' by nature? What if the church disapproved of Valla's audacious axiom? And what when the logic of the North should drive it to active conclusions in the rebellious hands of Martin Luther?

Lorenzo Valla himself was not afraid of his conclusions. As little as Pico della Mirandola, he foresaw the use to the Reformation of the spirit of scrutiny and inquiry applied to theological sanctities. He applied them where opportunity offered, and his pamphlet, issued at Naples, on 'the Donation of Constantine' raised constitutional questions which

the Reformers refused to put by. The Emperor Constantine in the eighth century had conveyed to Pope Silvester certain sovereign rights in Italy, which were or were not valid. To insinuate doubts as to the legality of the temporal possessions of the Holy See was a new feature of Humanism in Italy, and Valla's brilliance in attack was too valuable to be lost by the Pope. Valla received an invitation to Rome, where he was made an apostolic writer, and Pope Nicholas V was well advised in turning his critic into an ally. Under so tactful a master, Valla spent many useful and busy years, and he roared as gently as a sucking-dove in his 'Elegances of the Latin Language'. It passed through fifty-nine editions in sixty-six years and marks an epoch in the history of rhetoric. 'If those have done most for any science who have carried it farthest from the point whence they set out, philology', Hallam tells us, 'seems to owe quite as much to Valla as to anyone who has come since'.

After all, it was

### PHILOLOGY

which was wanted, if Petrarch's dream was to come true, and the liberal spirit of Cicero was to be renewed on Latin soil. For philology held the key to other disciplines than style. The vast, new deposits of edited and annotated texts, the commentaries, grammars, and translations, the eager exercises in original composition, all the apeing of Cicero and his compeers, all the erudite and spiritual travail which went to the interpretation of Plato, all the painstaking, brilliant beginnings of palæography, criticism, archæology, even the noise and fireworks which accompanied them, were an essential preliminary to a recovery of the liberty of learning and the freedom of will and conscience. They sowed the seeds of modern

literature and founded the grammar of modern life.

Take Lorenzo Valla's Pope, for example.

Tommaso Parentucelli (1398-1455) succeeded Eugenius IV under the style of Pope Nicholas V in 1447. Six years later Constantinople fell, and Nicholas was more eager to ensure the rescue of MSS from destruction than to punish the destroyers. Catholic historians are disposed to explain away his Humanistic leanings, but Gibbon's verdict may stand :

'The character of the man prevailed over the interests of the pope, and he sharpened those weapons which were soon pointed against the Roman church'.

George of Trebizond, Bessarion, Gaza, and a crowd of native Italian scholars were employed by Nicholas to prepare a library of Latin versions of Greek writers, which should open out Hellenism to all comers. Xenophon, Thucydides, Herodotus, Polybius, Appian, Theophrastus, Strabo, parts of Plato and Aristotle, Eusebius, and the Greek fathers were among the authors thus translated, and Nicholas is justly ranked as the founder of the Vatican Library in Rome.

The successor to Nicholas V was Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (1405-64), who reigned as Pope Pius II. His enlightened attitude towards the Humanists may be judged by a maxim from his own pen : ' Neither the morning-star nor the evening-star is fairer than the wisdom that is won by love of letters '. But his devotion to learning did not lead him to neglect the claims of the Church Militant, and he died at Ancona at the head of his Crusade against the Turk. Pope Pius is chiefly to be remembered for his admirable epistle on ' The Education of Children ', in which he defended the study of Latin, taught on humanistic



principles, against the timid reactionaries in his own fold.

We cannot count the roll of the philologists, some of whom were distinguished writers too. Leo Battista Alberti (c. 1407-72), for example, was remarkable even in that age for the profusion of his gifts as scholar, architect, musician, painter, mechanic, poet. Venetian by birth, he belonged to Florence by his family's exile from that city, to which they returned in 1434. There he took a part corresponding to his talents in many movements of Tuscan culture, and he wrote valuable manuals of several of the arts which he practised. His tales and dialogues were widely read, and he was gifted with a genuine sensibility for children, animals, travel, and scenery. Alberti's best known work was entitled *della Famiglia* (The Family), and gives an excellent account of the commercial aristocracy of Florence. Book III of this work (*Economico*) was nearly identical with a *della Famiglia* by Agnolo Pandolfini (1360-1446), but experts agree that Alberti was first in the field.

Alberti figured in a dialogue written in 1480 by Cristoforo Landino (1424-1504) and entitled the 'Camaldolese Discourses' (*Disputationes Camaldulenses*). This work, which was founded on Cicero's 'Tusculan Orations', took shape as an inquiry into the comparative value of the active and contemplative life. Alberti is the chief champion of the latter, and the main support of the former was entrusted to Lorenzo de Medici, to whom Landino had been tutor.

This kind of imaginary conversation by eminent persons of the hour was a common feature of contemporary letters. Bruni and Niccoli, for instance, figured in Valla's dialogue 'on Pleasure' as a Stoic and an Ascetic respectively, while the Epicurean point of view was presented by Antonio Beccadilli (1394-1471), a very graceful writer of foul poems.

Lives of Pope Nicholas V, of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio were written by Gianozzo Manetti (1396-1459), and a volume of 'Illustrious Men' by the first modern bookseller, Vespasiano, forms a valuable pendant to our authorities for the circle of Florentine *savants*.

Lastly, honour is due to the gracious memory of Vittorino da Feltre (1378-1446), whose *Giocosa*, or 'Pleasaunce', at Mantua, 'was', we are told, 'an ideal school, and, so far as a school ever may be, an ideal home. . . . As in Petrarch we recognize, in M. Renan's words, "the first modern man"', so with no less truth may we claim for the founder of the Mantuan School the significant title of "the first modern Schoolmaster"' <sup>1</sup>. His practice and doctrine belong to the history of education, not of literature; but our review of the century after Petrarch in the land which he loved and adorned may fitly close with Vittorino. For to apprentice Europe to the New Learning was the common aim of philologists and poets.

### III. HUMANISM ACROSS THE ALPS.

How fared that aim in other lands? What was the course and fortune of the Humanists who recrossed the Alps?

They had come to Italy as students. They returned as missionaries of culture, eagerly, piously anxious to spread the knowledge they had acquired. But how quickly the glad, young scholars found that learning brings cares as well as joys. In Italy it had been all joy. Neither Mirandola nor Valla had broken utterly with the Church of Rome. The one had mused on the Creation, and had sought to prove

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and other Humanist Educators*.

a congruity between the narratives in *Genesis*, Book i, and in Plato's *Timæus*. The other, with bolder lance, had attacked an ancient Papal title-deed. Yet each made his atonement with Rome. For all the spread of scepticism and irreligion, and despite the vehemence and the invective, Italian Humanists never seriously assailed the established strongholds of the Church.

But when the friends of Valla and Mirandola went back to their homes beyond the Alps, a difference is almost at once apparent. Humanism outside Italy seemed to change its character with the climate. It encountered more positive conditions. The Northern temperament was less responsive to the beauty of sensuousness; more disposed to apply the new canons to matters of conscience and belief; less apt at Greek art and æsthetics than at Greek criticism and logic; at sifting opinions, founding schools, emending texts; always proving, building, even destroying. Into this keener air, which Martin Luther was to fan to stronger winds, there came home the future headmasters: William Lily, first Highmaster of St. Paul's School, founded by Colet in 1509; Alexander Hegius, who reigned at Deventer, in the school of the Dutch Brethren of the Common Lot; and Jacob Wimpheling, the Hegius of South Germany, who kept school at Schlettstadt in Alsace. Came also Conrad Celtes, famed as the Ovid of the North, who spread the gospel of the New Learning from Erfurt to Cracow; Johann of Trittenheim (Trithemius), his eminent disciple; Rudolph Huysmann, known as Agricola, who taught at Heidelberg and Worms; Johann Müller, known as Regiomontanus, 'the greatest mathematician of the fifteenth century'<sup>1</sup>; Hartmann Schedel, antiquary at Nüremberg, and Rudolph von Langen, schoolmaster at

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Literature of Europe*.

Münster. By the same road across the Alps travelled William Grocyn, Politian's pupil, who was to lecture on Greek at Oxford, and Thomas Linacre, a foremost founder of the English College of Physicians. Linacre loved Italy so well that he marked his homeward journey by dedicating an altar 'to Italy' at the top of the Alpine pass. Back to Spain went the future Cardinal, Ximenez de Cimeros, founder of the College of Alcalá, where he organized the preparation of the first great Polyglot Bible. His chief assistant was Antonio de Lebrixa (Lebrissensis), who taught at Salamanca what he had learned at Bologna, and who became as famous for his dictionary of the Spanish language as for his reform of the pronunciation of Greek. Hungary reclaimed Joannes Vitez, afterwards Cardinal Archbishop and Chancellor to King Matthias Corvinus. Nor, in this brief list of scholars, to whom Italy had given welcome and god-speed, should the name be forgotten of Janus Lascaris, a Greek exile in Florence, who resided in Rome under Pope Leo X and in Paris under King Francis I. He was employed by the Humanist king to found the royal library at Fontainebleau, and, as Greek reader to Guillaume Budé, he helped to mould the foremost Hellenist of his age.

To the fate of some of these missionaries, or of the disciples whom they inspired, we shall return in later pages. Here we may cross the mountain-barrier, and seek the keener air on the other side, in the brilliant company of

#### JOHANN REUCHLIN (1455-1522).

We read what his Greek tutor said of him : *Ecce, Græcia nostro exilio transvolavit Alpes* : ' lo ! Greece by our exile has flown across the Alps ', and the saying may stand to express what was really

happening at this time. These ardent stepsons of Italian Humanism were carrying Greece across the Alps; and because Italy was their stepmother, not their mother, though, like Linacre, they built altars to Italy, they did not, like Petrarch before them, identify the New Learning with Italian patriotism. Their outlook was more positive and more detached. The splendid visions of Mirandola, whom Reuchlin had met in the South, disappeared with the talk they had exchanged. Mirandola had sought to unite the threefold systems of philosophy, Hebraic, Pauline, and Platonic, and had inscribed to Lorenzo de Medici his *Heptaplus*, or 'Seven Days of the Creation'. Reuchlin, restored to Germany, and to German thoroughness and practicality, let go the elusive mirage and tested the solid ground behind it. He took the first, obvious step of learning Hebrew from a Jew. 'The language of the Hebrews', Reuchlin wrote, 'is simple, uncorrupted, holy, terse, and vigorous. God confers in it direct with men, and men with angels, without interpreters, face to face, as one friend converses with another' <sup>1</sup>.

Thus taught and thus inspired, Reuchlin published in 1506 a little manual of Hebrew grammar, which he drove like a pier into the sands of fanciful, fashionable mysticism. No longer to imagine a heavenly mansion where Hebrew and Greek culture should dissolve in the final revelation of Christianity, but first to study the Old Testament by the dry light of Hebrew grammar, was the object of Reuchlin's book; and German scholarship, naturally inclined to approach the humanities through religion, was at once armed with a powerful weapon of doctrinal attack and reform. For if Hebrew could be articulated, it could be translated; and if Humanists had

<sup>1</sup> Reuchlin, *de Verbo Mirifico* (1494); quoted by Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Engl. transln.).



the right and power to translate the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, as their tutors had translated the Pagan Classics, how was the Church of Rome to guard its ancient prerogatives and to conserve the authority of the Latin Vulgate? The German translation of the Bible did not come till the year of Reuchlin's death. But meanwhile the future translator was supplied with the necessary tool for prising open the sealed treasury. A Hebrew grammar had been written: a far more formidable force than Mirandola's speculative musings; and 'the event which took the Old Testament out of the hand of phantasy and turned it into an instrument of reform'<sup>1</sup> was Reuchlin's *Rudimenta Hebraica*, which ushered in the Protestant Reformation.

So the year 1492, chosen as the terminus of the present chapter, was a year of closure in Italy and of beginning beyond the Alps. In that year died Lorenzo de Medici, who was swiftly followed to the grave by the most distinguished of his courtiers and by his fondest national hopes. In that year Columbus, the Navigator, sailing in the service of the King of Spain, opened a New World to Europe. In that year Spain conquered Granada and overthrew the Moors. In that year, or shortly before it, a new world of culture was opened by the use of the printer's art, invented at Mayence by Johann Gutenberg in the third quarter of the fifteenth century. The new presses were established in the 'seventies in most great European cities; at Westminster, in England, by William Caxton (c. 1422-91). Especially Aldo Manuzio (1449-1515), founder of the Aldine Press at Venice, and of the Hellenic Academy, is to be remembered for his ninety-six volumes of *editiones principes* of Greek books. In that year Erasmus was ordained

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Modern History*, ii.



in the Order of St. Augustine, and Reuchlin was taught Hebrew by a Jew.

The mind of Europe, lavishly prepared, had to pass through the straits of the Renaissance. We shall not attempt to weigh the relative significance to civilization of the works of the Humanists beyond the Alps. To one the discovery of America, to another the invention of Printing, to a third the translation of the Bible, will seem the transcendent sign, and all three are partial aspects of some formula still to be devised for

‘ that solemn fifteenth century, which can hardly be studied too much, not merely for its positive results in the things of the intellect and the imagination, its concrete works of art, its special and prominent personalities with their profound æsthetic charm, but for its general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type ’<sup>1</sup>.

But to those who regard the Reformation, with its vast and ramified effects, as the greatest single movement, or the greatest movement described by a single name, which can be traced, link by link, to the initiative of Petrarch, ‘ the first modern Man ’, a few lines in conclusion to this chapter, though they overrun its terminus, are due to the immediate results of Reuchlin’s Hebrew lessons in 1492.

Such a conclusion is more appropriate because those results are to be studied not merely in history but in literature. They are available in pure book-form, and the book in which they are to be found took shape as an extraordinarily vivid satire, written by the Humanists against the Church, or by the reformers of the future against the defenders of the

<sup>1</sup> W. Pater, *The Renaissance*.

past ; in a word, by the poets against the monks. The issue which Valla had evaded, and which Mirandola's dreams had never visualized, was joined at the earliest opportunity by the adversaries of Reuchlin's new cut. In 1492 Reuchlin was learning Hebrew. Two years later he issued his pamphlet, *de Verbo Mirifico*, in which Baruchias, a rabbi, and Capnio (Reuchlin's scholar's-name), a Christian, discoursed on the wonders of the Hebrew tongue. In 1506 appeared his Hebrew grammar, and from that date the die was cast. The first outbreak of hostilities came from an unexpected quarter. A Jewish pervert, Johann Pfefferkorn, ' a vile Jew who became a viler Christian ', as Erasmus shrewdly described him, regretting his apostasy, perhaps, now that Hebrew promised to be profitable, saw a chance of conciliating his new friends by defaming his old. He got hold of the religious sister of the Humanist Emperor Maximilian, and, backed by her powerful influence, he made his voice heard in Rome. The clerical party took action with a petition to suppress Hebrew books (with the sole exception of the Bible), as subversive to faith and morals, and Reuchlin's Oriental studies were thus threatened at their source. Of Pfefferkorn's interviews with Reuchlin, and the scholar's exposure of the sciolist, we cannot pause to write at length. There were many side-issues to the conflict, but virtually it was resolved into a long-drawn duel between Reuchlin and Rome. For Reuchlin was quick to see that the true objective of the anti-Semites was then, as so often, not Judaism but Humanism. The liberty of learning was assailed by the attack on Semitic culture.

The Humanists rallied to Reuchlin's side. ' The powers of light stood marshalled against the powers of darkness ' ; and among the first to make an effective move was a little group of Erfurt dons, known as the

poets of the university, who had a long score to pay off against the Dominican monks of Cologne. Reuchlin had circulated a sheaf of 'Letters of Illustrious Men', who had written in support of his cause; and it occurred to one or two of the Erfurt wits to play devil's advocate for the prosecution with a series (two series, eventually) of 'Letters of Obscure Men'. Ostensibly written by the monks on behalf of the Inquisitor at Cologne, actually these letters revealed the sordid ignorance and squalor of the ecclesiastical rout, ignobly content to be obscure, who, at the bidding of a Jewish apostate, sought authority from Rome to suppress Hebrew scholarship and culture. Half the satire is in the language: the dog-Latin of the cloister, which its clerical patrons deemed efficient to withstand the rising tide of Humanism. Here we have the advantage of availing ourselves of a recent racy English version <sup>1</sup>.

In Book I, Epistle 25, Magister Philipp Steinmetz sends greeting to Magister Ortwin Gratius, one of the professors at Cologne—

'Sicut scripsi vobis saepe, ego habeo molestiam quod ipsa ribaldria, scilicet facultas poetarum, fit communis et augetur per omnes provincias et regiones. Tempore meo fuit tantum unus poeta qui vocatus fuit Samuel. Et nunc solum in ista civitate sunt bene viginti, et vexant nos omnes qui tenemus cum antiquis. . . . Dicitur hic quod omnes poetae volunt stare cum doctore Reuchlin contra Theologos. . . . Ego scio quod etiam habetis multas vexas ab istis poetis saecularibus. Quamvis enim vos estis etiam poeta, tamen non estis talis

<sup>1</sup> *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum ad Venerabilem virum Magistrum Ortwinum Gratium Daventriensem . . . variis et locis et temporibus missae, ac demum in volumen coactae.* Part i, 1514; Part ii, 1517. The quotations are taken from Mr. F. G. Stokes's valuable edition of 'The Latin Text, with an English Rendering, Notes, and an Historical Introduction'. Chatto and Windus, 1909.

poeta. Sed vos tenetis cum Ecclesia, et cum hoc estis bene fundatus in Theologia. Et quando compilatis carmina, tunc non sunt de vanitatibus, sed de laudibus sanctorum ' <sup>1</sup>.

In the next Epistle, Anton Rubenstadt propounds the delicate question, ' whether, namely, a Doctor of Laws is bound to make obeisance to a Magister-noster who weareth not his rightful habit '. The jurists of Frankfort differed, and Rubenstadt urges Gratius—

' But, I pray you, unfold your opinion, and if of yourself you cannot tell, there are jurists and theologians in the University of Cologne with whom to take counsel. I would fain know the truth, for God is truth, and whoso loveth truth loveth God also '.

And this preoccupation with trifles was on the eve of the Reformation in Germany !

In Epistle 60 of Book II Magister Wernher Stompff sends much the same greeting to Ortwin Gratius—

' You tell me that the cause of the Faith fareth ill at Rome. Gadzookers ! What can we say ? Those Jurists and Poets will overthrow the whole faculty of the Artists and Theologians ; for even here, in our University, they would fain browbeat the Magisters and the Divines. A fellow here claimed of late that a Bachelor of Law should take

<sup>1</sup> ' As I have oftentimes told you, I chafe bitterly because that wild ruff, to wit the Faculty of Poets, groweth and extendeth throughout every province and region. In my time there was only one poet—and his name was Samuel—but now in a single burg a good score may be found to harass us who cling to the ancients. . . . The rumour goes that all the Poets here will take Doctor Reuchlin's part against the Theologians. . . . I know that these profane poets harass you greatly, notwithstanding that you are a poet yourself—but not of that kind : for you hold with the church, and are more-over well grounded in Theology. When you indite verses, they deal not with vanities, but with the praises of the Saints '.

precedence of a Master of Arts. Then quoth I, "That is impossible, I can prove that Masters of Art rank higher than Doctors of Law. Doctors of Law are learned in one science only—namely Jurisprudence; but Magisters are masters of the Seven Liberal Arts, and therefore are the more learned". "Go to Italy", said he, "and tell them that you are a Magister of Leipsic, and see how they will bait you!" But I made answer that I could defend my Mastership as well as any that cometh out of Italy. And so I departed, thinking within myself that our faculty is sorely maligned, and this is a crying shame. For it is the Masters of Arts who should rule the Universities, and now the Jurists claim to govern them, which is a thing most indecent. But I bid you be of good cheer, and call not in question the victory of the Cause of the Faith . . . so long as Pfefferkorn abideth a Christian',

and so forth. But not by such aid nor with champions like these (*non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis*) was 'The Cause of the Faith' to be saved from the intrushing flood of the Renaissance. The Reuchlin case was dragged on at Rome, and solemn judgments were pronounced at great length, till no one quite knew to which side the judges leaned. But public opinion in Europe never doubted who was right. *Solvuntur risu tabulæ*. The mock monks' letters found their mark, and Reuchlin's victory over the Obscurantists forms an important landmark in the history of Humanism beyond the Alps.

Of Konrad Muth (Mutianus), leader of the Erfurt poets, and a stalwart hater of the Theologians; of Johann Jäger (Crotus Rubianus), who wrote the first forty-one Epistles; of the gallant and learned knight, Ulrich von Hutten, who completed Part I

and wrote the whole of Part II, no other memorial is required. The 'Letters of Obscure Men' is one of the world's great satires. Composed on the eve of the tremendous warfare which the 'Poets' were to wage against the 'Theologians' with German weapons on German soil, it is the protest of Italian Humanism against the immobility of the Church of Rome. The conflict was of cultures, as of wits. *Ecce, Græcia nostro exsilio transvolavit Alpes*; but Greece on the German side, Greece speaking through Reuchlin, who had sat at the feet of Argyropoulos, encountered the deep antagonism of 'obscure men' armed with authority. So the path of the German Renaissance led through the Wars of the Reformation.



## CHAPTER V.

### The Transit through 1492.

#### I. TRANSITION WRITERS.

Not every man of letters in the fifteenth century carried his quarrel, like Reuchlin, to the ears of the Pope. The Renaissance was big with discoveries, the Reformation was big with wars, but the change from medieval to modern conditions did not come suddenly or in a night. We can track it here and there, in a tenderer sense of passion, in a graver note of responsibility, in a deeper impatience of wrong. But life at home did not stand still, while the Humanists went and came; the sun and the stars still shone; the savour of spring was sweet, and regret dyed the falling leaf.

One poet of life's common day occurs particularly to memory, as we try to measure the road by which men travelled out of the fifteenth century. Midway between Froissart and Rabelais, the type and anti-type of French feudalism, occurs the brief and troubled lifetime of the Frenchman known as

#### FRANÇOIS VILLON (1431-?).

He did not live till the year of fate, 1492. He was outlawed in 1463, when, on January 8th, 'he walked off into the unknown'<sup>1</sup>. Yet he belongs to the modern world, precisely because he overheard 'that

<sup>1</sup> H. de Vere Stacpoole, *François Villon: His Life and Times* (Hutchinson, 1916). I have ventured to quote some translations from this biographical monograph.

human ending to night-wind ', which a poet's ear catches quicker than a pope's.

Let us listen to this poet of the fifteenth century whom the spirit of the Humanists passed by. His finest ballad is familiar in D. G. Rossetti's translation, and we submit the French and English versions—

#### BALLADE DES DAMES DU TEMPS JADIS.

' Dictes-moy, où, n'en quel pays,  
Est Flora, la belle Romaine ?  
Archipiade, ne Thais,  
Qui fut sa cousine germaine ?  
Echo, parlant quand bruyt ou maine,  
Dessus rivièrre ou sus estan,  
Qui beaulté est trop plus qu' humaine ? . . .  
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan !

' Où est la tres-sage Heloïs  
Pour qui fut chastré et puis moyne  
Pierre Esbaillart, à Sainet-Denys ?  
Pour son amour eut cest essoyne.  
Semblablement, où est la Royne  
Qui commanda que Buridan  
Fust jetté en ung sac en Seine ? . . .  
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan !

' La Royne Blanche comme ung lys,  
Qui chantoit à voix de seraine,  
Berthe au grand pied, Beatrix, Allys,  
Haremburges, qui tint le Mayne,  
Et Jehanne, la bonne Lorraine,  
Qu'Anglois bruslerent à Rouen :  
Où sont-ilz, Vierge souveraine ? . . .  
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan !

#### ENVOI.

' Prince, n'enquerez, de sepmaine,  
Où elles sont, ne de cest an,  
Car ce refrain le vous remaine :  
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan !'

#### THE BALLAD OF DEAD LADIES.

' Tell me now, in what hidden way is  
Lady Flora, the lovely Roman ?  
Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thais,  
Neither of them the fairer woman ?  
Where is Echo, beheld of no man,  
Only heard on river and mere,—  
She whose beauty was more than human ? . . .  
But where are the snows of yester-year !

‘Where’s Heloise, the learned nun,  
 For whose sake Abeillard, I ween,  
 Lost manhood and put priesthood on  
 (From Love he won such dule and teen !)  
 And where, I pray you, is the Queen  
 Who willed that Buridan should steer  
 Sewed in a sack’s mouth down the Seine ? . . .  
 But where are the snows of yester-year !

‘White Queen Blanche, like a queen of lilies,  
 With a voice like any mermaid,—  
 Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,  
 And Ermengarde, the lady of Maine,—  
 And that good Joan, whom Englishmen  
 At Rouen doomed and burned her there,—  
 Mother of God, where are they then ? . . .  
 But where are the snows of yester-year ?

ENVOI.

‘Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,  
 Where they are gone, nor yet this year,  
 Except with this for an overword,—  
 But where are the snows of yester-year !’

What can we say of this poem which has not been better said before ? Its beauty is not enhanced by referring to the experience of the Black Death, which directed men’s thoughts to the grave. We gain nothing by calling it a cry of medieval mortality projected into *le lyrisme* of a later age. Formally, though we trace its refrain back through lineal ancestors to early Latin hymnody ; spiritually, though it ascends right up to Heine and Verlaine, yet Villon’s note was unique and his own. Somehow, he touched the hem of truth, through all ignoble works and days. He thieved, and drank, and brawled. He was familiar with a felon’s prison, he was even sentenced to be hanged. He haunted the stews of Paris till his final sentence of banishment ; but, as Swinburne royally acknowledged, Villon’s lyric verses defy time—

‘From thy feet now death hath washed the mire,  
 Love reads out first at head of all our quire,  
 Villon, our sad, bad, glad, mad brother’s name’.

For Villon saw the light in darkness. He could tune a stave to earn pence from the gay King René of

Anjou, but he cherished no illusions as to the permanence of kings. After all, it was interpretation which was wanted, if the new life was to be lived in the old world ; and Villon, though he went to earth and disappeared finally from ken, succeeded in building a firm bridge between the old and the new—between the old-time Garden of the Rose, which we visited with Guillaume de Lorris, and the new-time excursions in criticism, on which we shall accompany the Sieur de Montaigne. Villon's poetic machinery was old-fashioned. He hit out blindly in a fight against outworn sanctions of authority and prohibitions without compensating boons. Yet the artist in Villon was sincere. In a sense, it is even true to say of him, and of his passionate, impotent aims, that 'There has been no greater artist in French verse, as there has been no greater poet ; and the main part of the history of poetry in France is the record of a long forgetting of all that Villon found out for himself' <sup>1</sup>.

How and where Villon lived does not matter. His was always a hand-to-mouth existence—from another's hand to his own mouth. Nor is posterity much interested in the fact that he wrote a *Petit Testament* in forty stanzas of *ottava rima* and a *Grand Testament* in one hundred and seventy-three. The testament was one of the common forms affected by poets in the Middle Ages, and Villon, who took it as he found it, transformed it by the passion of his lyre. His great ballads were integral parts of it, like the songs in Tennyson's *Princess*. We have already quoted the most famous. Among others which Villon composed were the terrible *Ballade des Pendus* (we said that he narrowly escaped hanging, and what poetic mind save Dostoevsky's has been thrilled by a like experience ?), the verses translated by Rossetti

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Symons, *Figures of Several Centuries*.

as 'His Mother's Service to Our Lady', and a few more hardly less moving. It is a relief from Villon's sorry story to turn back to his words that burn—

'A pitiful poor woman, shrunk and old,  
I am, and nothing learn'd in letter-lore.  
Within my parish-cloister I behold  
A painted Heaven where harps and lutes adore,  
And eke an Hell whose damned folk see the full sore :  
One bringeth fear, the other joy to me.  
That joy, great Goddess, make thou mine to be,—  
Thou of whom all must ask it even as I ;  
And that which faith desires, that let it see.  
For in this faith I choose to live and die '.

There were poets akin to Villon in their perception of change, especially in Scotland and Spain. Thus, William Dunbar and Gavin Douglas, at the head of a group of Scottish poets, filled the gap between Chaucer and Spenser with allegorical verses, composed in the *Rose* tradition, which yet manifested a consciousness of the pressure of the new time on the old. John Skelton, too, their East Anglian contemporary, commanded a vein of social satire and a taste for the seamy side of life, which recall Villon's point of view. Moreover, he tried metrical experiments, based partly on French examples ; and, departing from Chaucer's models, as Villon did not depart from medieval forms, Skelton particularly affected a short, packed, *staccato* measure, which is still described as Skeltonical. He would seem to have owed the suggestion to a French writer, Martial d'Auvergne (died 1508), in his *Vigiles de la Mort de Charles Sept*—

'Though my rime be ragged,  
Tattered and jagged,  
If ye take well therewith,  
It hath in it some pith '

Skelton claimed ; and his pith, though partaking of rag-time and burlesque, was distinctly a promising innovation.

Satire, again, was the note of some Spanish poets

in this period. We may select the anonymous writer of *Mingo Revulgo* (1472), a dialogue in thirty-two stanzas of nine octosyllabic verses between Domingo Vulgus, the plebeian, and Cil Arribato, the aristocrat. It is a sign of the times worth remarking, that social types were now chosen for the dramatic interplay of character, instead of abstract qualities of vice and virtue. Or we may select the contemporary *coplas* (stanzas) of Jorge Manrique (c. 1440-1474), who, like so many Spanish men of letters, was soldier and writer too. Manrique's memorial verses to his father have won immortal renown, in the original language, in Latin verse, in a musical setting, and in Longfellow's spirited translation, from which we quote a few lines—

'Where is the King, Don Juan? Where  
Each royal prince and noble heir  
Of Aragon? . . .  
Where are the high-born dames, and where  
Their gay attire and jewell'd hair,  
And odours sweet? . . .  
O World! so few the years we live,  
Would that the life which thou dost give  
Were life indeed!'

In this cry of the Spanish captain there is the same 'pith' and essence of individualism as in Skelton's 'ragged rime' or Villon's 'sad, mad' lyrics. Note particularly his apostrophe to the 'World', and his demand that, within this world itself, and not in Heaven or Utopia, human life shall find its fulfilment. The keynote of all this poetry is a sense of arisen personality, and of the struggle of the spirit of man to outstep the limits of medieval sympathy.

We spoke of Villon's lifetime as midway between Froissart and Rabelais. Still more typical of the transition, in however different a sphere, was the contemporary work of the French prose-historian,



## PHILIPPE DE COMMINES (c. 1447-1511).

No kind of intercourse is conceivable between the roystering gallows-bird, who poured his soul out in song, and the grave, dignified diplomatist, as remote from Villon's vices as from his haunts. Yet Paris had room for both in the fifteenth century, and each was in advance of his own times. Communes, like Froissart, was *un historien*, but an historian of a new type in Europe. Hitherto, historical writers, building deep on the *chanson* and the chronicle, had been partial and one-sided. Villehardouin, as we saw, wrote a *chanson de geste* in prose. The Sire de Joinville and Sturla depicted contemporary heroes. Froissart's feudal annals were the work of a feudal knight. But Communes was a diplomatist writing history, such history as Wolsey might have written if he had published his diaries. He was the first of a long line of opportunists in the higher walks of statesmanship. Though he was bound to the crumbling Middle Ages by a hundred ties of instinct and style, his intellect reached out to the Renaissance; and the German Humanist known as Melanchthon joined Communes with Sallust and Cæsar in a syllabus for the instruction of princes. His personal career in the French State was marked by ambition and prudence, which brought their appropriate rewards, and a like coldness of perception distinguished his *Chronique de Louis XI* and his two books of the *Chronique de Charles VIII*. He turned away from the glamour of events to the political meanings behind them. Battles interested him for their causes and results; not for the battle-pictures which stirred Froissart's fighting-man's blood. Forces, influences, tendencies, personal factors, he carefully measured and weighed by a standard of practical value, which gave him a novel power of generalization. He used judgment, a

hardly explored faculty ; and, within the limits of his circumstances and of the age, Commynes may fairly be said to have anticipated the political method of the greater statesman-author in Italy,

NICCOLO DI BERNARDO DEI MACHIAVELLI (1469-1527), whom he met in 1505 at Florence.

Machiavelli, like Commynes, was a member of a good family, filled several high offices of State, and was introduced by diplomacy and intrigue to various capitals of Europe. His first-hand knowledge of secret policy was formidable and extensive, and he far surpassed Commynes in sheer literary ability. His terse and vigorous Italian prose was especially notable in its time for a freedom from the medieval snares of over-ornament and prolixity. Moreover, he was not a one-book writer. Eight volumes of 'Florentine History', a treatise on 'The Art of War', lectures on Livy, delivered in Florence to crowded and distinguished audiences, and minor biographies and monographs, still bear witness to the seriousness of his studies ; while Machiavelli's prose-comedies of Florentine life, especially his *Clizia* and *Mandragola*, were well thumbed by Ben Jonson and later dramatists, and prove the versatility of his talents. But Machiavelli's blackened reputation rests first and last on *Il Principe*, a little study of the making of a prince, which is unique in its after-history, and which, in clearness and conciseness, in mastery of arrangement and subordination, and in economy of verbiage and rhetoric, achieved an advance in skill at once real and considerable.

Omitting for a moment its after-history, what is, or was, *Il Principe* of Machiavelli ? Quite simply, the purpose of the treatise was to supply the future ruler of Florence, the long-sought heir of Lorenzo the Magnificent, with a manual of political expediency,

which, in the belief of a past master of diplomacy, would save his subjects and his crown. Since it was the writer's fixed purpose, as he declared,

‘ to indite a matter which shall be useful to him who apprehends it, it appears to me more appropriate to follow up the real truth of a thing than the imagination of it. For many have pictured republics and principalities which in fact have never been known or seen, because how one lives is so far distant from how one ought to live, that he who neglects what is done for what ought to be done, sooner effects his ruin than his preservation. . . . Hence it is necessary for a prince wishing to hold his own to know how to do wrong ’<sup>1</sup>.

Here, surely, the perception of contrast and disparity is essentially the same as in the verses which we quoted from Jorge Manrique—

‘ O World ! so few the years we live,  
Would that the life which thou dost give  
Were life indeed ! ’

The same, again, though scorning the self-delusion, as in Villon's lines on ‘His Mother's Service to Our Lady’—

‘ I behold  
A painted Heaven where harps and lutes adore . . .  
That joy, great Goddess, make thou mine to be, . . .  
For in this faith *I choose* to live and die ’.

The difference is, that Machiavelli was logical. He tore down the veil from that faith which Villon saw but did not share, and pushed to a further conclusion the pious aspiration of Manrique. In the real world of Florence in his day he would teach a malleable prince so to secure his throne as to ensure his people's

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xv. The quotations from *Il Principe* are taken from the version by Mr. W. K. Marriott. Dent, 1908. (Everyman's Library.)

prosperity. Towards the mere instruments of policy Machiavelli's attitude of detachment was as cold and positive as that of Commynes. The outside of things did not interest him, except to make sure that his Prince was never robbed of profit or renown by the greed or stupidity of others. For him, too, the pomp and circumstance, even the romance and humanity of statecraft, were strictly subordinated to the end in view, which was to preserve the ruler's power, as the sole condition of the safety of the State. His real Prince would be

‘ sufficiently prudent to avoid the reproach of those vices which would lose him the State ’ ;

for Florence, since Dante's time, had known the evil of weak rulers. But the prudent Prince, though he should avoid them if he could,

‘ need not make himself uneasy at incurring a reproach for those vices without which the State can only be saved with difficulty. For, if everything is considered carefully, it will be found that something which looks like virtue, if followed, would be his ruin ; while something else, which looks like vice, if followed, brings him security and prosperity ’ <sup>1</sup>.

The seat of Machiavelli's trouble was, that Florence wanted stable government. A private man's vice might be virtuous in the ruler whom Florence desiderated—

‘ Every one admits how praiseworthy it is in a prince to keep faith, and to live with integrity and not with craft. Nevertheless, our experience has been that those princes who have done great things

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xv.

have held good faith of little account, and have known how to circumvent the intellect of men by craft. . . . Therefore a wise lord cannot, nor ought he to, keep faith when such observance may be turned against him, and when the reasons that caused him to pledge it exist no longer ' <sup>1</sup>.

These politic teachings have an ominous modern sound. We find them almost verbally reproduced, nearly four hundred years after, in Bismarck's *Thoughts and Recollections*, and we regretfully concur with the dictum of the first Baron Acton, that Machiavelli ' is more rationally intelligible when illustrated by lights falling not only from the century he wrote in, but from our own ' <sup>2</sup>. Indeed, if we fully seize the point, and seek a light from 1914, we shall agree with another Cambridge historian, that ' it is impossible to understand Machiavelli without comparing him with Nietzsche ' <sup>3</sup>. We need not press the comparison. Machiavelli's doctrine, we iterate in his defence, was devised for his own time and place, when Florentine government was a shuttlecock between Savonarola's theocratic visions and the hopes based on a restoration of the Medici. Unfortunately, the prince *à la* Machiavelli was never forthcoming in the flesh. Though Machiavelli set up a dummy, and dressed him in robe and crown, and put the sceptre in his hand, and furnished him with a pocket-guide to kingdom, yet Lorenzo II was but a painted image of his grandfather, The Magnificent. If Lorenzo II had satisfied Florentine hopes, or if, from another point of view, his uncle, Pope Leo X, had trusted Machiavelli less and had honoured Martin Luther more . . .

But the *ifs* of history are vain. The Reformation

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xviii.

<sup>2</sup> L. A. Burd (ed.), *Il Principe* : with Introduction by Lord Acton.

<sup>3</sup> J. N. Figgis, *From Gerson to Grotius*.

took its appointed course, and the concatenation is clear. The descent from Petrarch to Nietzsche led through the purgatory of Machiavellism. At the risk of anticipating a little, we may number the links in order—

1. Pagan ideas and institutions found complete and artistic expression in the works of Cicero and Virgil.

2. The light of these 'two eyes of learning' was turned on the authority and altruism of medieval ideas by, chiefly, Petrarch, the father of the Humanists. (Humanism = worldliness, as distinct from other-worldliness.)

3. The revival of pagan learning encouraged the individual to assert his own rights and responsibilities. Navigation and physical science reinforced this tendency, and printing distributed its results.

4. Æsthetic Humanism gave birth to Criticism, which was extended from the texts of pagan writers to the sacred archives of the Church. (L. Valla disputed the Donation of Constantine.)

5. Reuchlin followed Mirandola as Orientalist. His Hebrew grammar of 1506 led to Luther's translation of the Old Testament.

6. Religious differences issued in territorial wars. The distribution of creeds by territories enlarged the ground of neighbours' quarrels, and

7. Personal individualism of the pagan type was merged in a civic consciousness, tending perforce to become subordinate to the practical need of the safety of the State (or Prince).

8. The problem of the legitimate degree of subordination in this conflict between Individualism and Absolutism was discussed by Machiavelli in *Il Principe* with special reference to the exceptional circumstances obtaining in Florence in his day.



That this consecution is correct may be proved (or it is at least made probable) by the conclusion to *Il Principe*, in which Machiavelli apostrophized Lorenzo II—

‘This opportunity therefore ought not to be allowed to pass for letting Italy at last see her liberator appear. What door would be closed to him? What envy would hinder him? What Italian would refuse him homage? To all of us this foreign dominion stinks. Let, therefore, your illustrious House take up this charge, so that under its standard our native country may be ennobled, and under its auspices may be verified the saying of Petrarch—

“Virtù contro al Furore  
Prenderà l’arme, e fia il combatter corto :  
Che l’antico valore  
Negli italici cuor non é ancor morto ”<sup>1</sup>.

We quoted these lines in a former chapter, and submit a fresh translation here—

‘Virtue against blind Might  
Shall take up arms, nor long will be the fight ;  
The fire that burn’d of old  
In ev’ry Italian heart is not yet cold’.

But Petrarch’s stirring appeal, voiced in his noble ode to Italy, was urged now too late—or too soon. Meeting the lines in their present context, at the close of Machiavelli’s *Prince*, which they served to adorn and to exalt, we reflect with sorrow on the degradation of the *Virtù*, or Individualism, of Petrarch into the *Kultur*, or State-Absolutism, of Nietzsche. How this decline galloped, we are aware ; how it started, is of interest to literature as much as to history, and our remarks on this fascinating treatise may fitly close with a note on its after-history.

An ‘all-powerful influence’ is ascribed, on the

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xxvi.

high authority of Prof. Courthope, to Machiavelli's writings, 'separated from their actual object of merely local circumstances, in the realm of European imagination' <sup>1</sup>. If we enter that realm only half a century after Machiavelli's death, we shall find that the event which extracted Machiavellism from Machiavelli (and which derived 'old Nick' from Niccolo) was the imputation of the Massacre of the Huguenots on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1572, under King Henry IV of France and his consort Catherine de Medici, to the direct influence of *Il Principe*. This occurred in a little book, written in 1576 by a French Protestant, Innocent Gentillet, and commonly known by its short title, *Anti-Machiavel*. With the religious and political issues, and with the dynastic prejudice against the French queen, we are not here concerned. Literature is interested in the record that an English version of the pamphlet, which enjoyed an extraordinary vogue, was published in 1577. The translator was one Simon Patericke, and he had the good luck to find, not one market only, but two. Apart from politics and fanaticism, both *pro* and *contra* Machiavelli, the book made an instant appeal to students of morals and character. Villainy had dramatic value, and the rising masters of the Elizabethan stage were quick to seize its acting qualities. The significance of the Machiavellian hero to the theatre of Marlowe and Shakespeare has been made the subject of special studies <sup>2</sup>, and will recur for notice on a later page. Here we would cite two verses from the Prologue to Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*—

'Albeit the world thinks Machiavel is dead,  
Yet was his soul but flown across the Alps'.

The words have a familiar ring : *Græcia transvolavit*

<sup>1</sup> W. J. Courthope, *History of English Poetry*, ii.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., V. Boyer, *The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy*.

*Alpes*, Greece has flown across the Alps ; we remember how Reuchlin's tutor sent his favourite pupil home to Germany with this godspeed ringing in his ears. Mirandola and Reuchlin at Florence had talked the stars to bed, and the Florentine nights of Humanism slid into the heat of the Reformation. Yet a few more years of religious warfare, a few more experiments in princes' treaties, a few more phases of the ideal, and Marlowe extends his welcome to Machiavelli's soul across the Alps. How dire a spiritual change in the brief span since Reuchlin died, or since Doctor Thomas Linacre built his altar to Italy on an Alpine pass !

The positive statecraft of Machiavelli was matched by the philosophy of Pomponazzi (1462-1525), whose Latin treatise on immortality had the honour of being burned by the Inquisition, and by the historical method of Francesco Guicciardini (1482-1560). But there was another soul of Italy, which dwelt apart. To this trinity of Italian thinkers a striking contrast is afforded by the incurious attitude of their contemporary and countryman, the great poet

LUDOVICO GIOVANNI ARIOSTO (1474-1533).

' Of Dames, of Knights, of arms, of love's delight,  
Of courtesies, of high attempts I speak,  
Then when the Moors transported all their might  
On Africk seas, the force of France to break:  
Incited by the youthful heat and spight  
Of Agramant, their King, that vowed to wrea  
The death of King Trayano (lately slain)  
Upon the Roman Emperor Charlemain ' <sup>1</sup>.

There was nothing positive in this programme of the first lines of the *Orlando Furioso*, and we learn without overmuch surprise that the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, to whom the poem was shown in manuscript, asked

<sup>1</sup> From the English Tudor translation by Sir John Harington.

Ariosto where he had found so big a bundle of trash. 'The magic and marvels of romance, the restless movement of knight-errantry, the love of peril and adventure for their own sake, the insane appetite for combat, the impractical virtues no less than the capricious wilfulness of Paladins and Saracens, presented to the age and race of men like Guicciardini nothing but a mad unprofitable medley' <sup>1</sup>. We learn, too, without surprise, that the race of men like Machiavelli and Guicciardini left Ariosto unmoved. What odds, he asked, in a Latin poem in 1496, if the French King threaten Italian turrets with all the engines of war; 'let Philiroe sing to her lute, while I lie beneath the arbutus-tree beside the sound of running water, and no care will disturb me'—

' Quid Galliarum navibus aut equis  
Paret minatus Carolus, asperi  
Furore militis tremendo,  
Turribus Ausoniis ruinam?  
Rursus quid hostis prospiciat sibi,  
Me nulla tangat cura, sub arbuto  
Jacentem aquae ad murmur cadentis'. . . .

The burden of servitude was the same, whether imposed on this flank or on that; and, though Ariosto had his lot of fighting in the endless struggles of the times, and could describe a battlefield from his own experience (there was one where the dead were so close together that for many miles no path was left save over the corpses), yet his soldiership never preoccupied him, and, on the whole, he passed through 1492 and the distractions of the succeeding years unperturbed by anything more serious than crises of his affections and changes in his patrons' favours. His headquarters was Ferrara, where he spent about fifteen years at the court of the inappreciative Cardinal. In 1518 he transferred his allegiance to Ippolito's brother, the reigning Duke,

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Symonds, *op. cit.*

and he was posted for three miserable years to administer the affairs of the swampy province of Garfagnana. The task was wholly uncongenial, and, greatly to the poet's satisfaction, as, possibly, to that of the provincials, he was recalled to Ferrara. There he built himself a house, inscribed with the famous couplet—

‘ Parva, sed apta mihi, sed nulli obnoxia, sed non  
Sordida, parta meo sed tamen aere domus ’.

(‘ A little house, but suited to me, but obstructive to none, but not poor, but yet bought by my own earnings ’.) (The last words convey the meaning that the *Orlando Furioso* was proving lucrative.) There, too, like Goethe at Weimar, Ariosto managed the ducal theatre, and produced some comedies of his own in the manner, almost the letter, of Terence. It was a tranquil evening to an easeful life, and he acquired without any difficulty the habit of relieving its tediousness by satirizing in private the prince whom he flattered officially.

Flattery, plagiarism, and irregularity are the three, and the only three, faults which the unkindest critics (since the Cardinal) have ever found in *Orlando Furioso*: flattery of the d’Este family, which Ippolito, more than any, might have condoned; plagiarism of Matteo Boiardo; and irregularity of structure and design. We may frankly admit all three. (1) To flatter the reigning prince on whose favour a poet depended was a Court-convention of the period, which is neither in good taste nor in bad taste, but in changing taste. Geoffrey of Monmouth began it, when he linked up the kings of England with Aeneas of Troy and Arthur of Wales; even Lord Tennyson practised it, when he linked up the virtues of Prince Albert with those of the king of his *Idylls*; and Ariosto, ‘king of Court-poets’, as Mr. Edmund

Gardner aptly calls him, was thoroughly in the vogue when he sought to render illustrious the origins of the d'Este family, and consequently to exalt the reigning Duke. Tasso and Spenser, as we shall see, did the same by a later Duke of Ferrara and Queen Elizabeth. (2) The continuation, or *rifacimento* (re-fake is a literal rendering) of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* is likewise a matter of changing taste, which cannot be settled by modern principles. Jean de Meun, as we saw, took over from dead Guillaume de Lorris and transformed the *Roman de la Rose*. Careful students of Shakespeare are aware of the extent of his borrowings. French drama, again, in the *grand siècle*, was almost immeasurably indebted to the prior work of Spanish playwrights. Moreover, the subject of Count Roland in the old *matière de France* was every man's property ('à nul homme entendant', as we have seen), and Ariosto could urge, in plea of plagiarism, that he found Boiardo's broken cantos and turned them into a finished Italian poem. (3) Admittedly, his poem is a poetic medley with no clear plan or design, and its course is interrupted, or embellished, by verse-tales (*novelle*) in its own metre, the national *ottava rima*. It is for Ariosto's readers to judge if this planlessness makes for beauty or the reverse.

Against these three alleged faults we may set with confidence the three virtues discovered by Hallam in the *Orlando Furioso*. These are 'purity of taste', 'grace of language', and 'harmony of versification'. A fourth virtue is ingenuity of invention. Precisely those qualities were sought by successive generations of Italian Humanists in their long and painstaking labours, partly reviewed in the last chapter, to render the tongue of modern Italy capable of the beauties of ancient Latin. So at last a Virgil reappeared, not speaking the Latin tongue, nor



revolving the Latin theme—*tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem*—but singing in the new octave stanzas, swept by a master's hand into undulating waves of flawless rhythm and perfect cadence, the romantic love which drove to madness Roland, paladin of Charlemagne.

This was Ariosto's boon, his largess to poets to be. He left for the emulation of modern Europe the perfect model of a romance-epic.

How sedulously he was imitated we shall discover. Spenser, Shakespeare, Byron were all partially in debt to him, and his Cantos 34 and 35, with Astolfo's Journey to the Moon and all the irony and sadness of that limbo for vain, unwanted things, were not overlooked by Milton in *Paradise Lost*, Book III—

‘ Store hereafter from the Earth  
Up hither like aerial vapours flew  
Of all things transitory and vain, when sin  
With vanity had filled the works of men—  
Both all things vain, and all who in vain things  
Built their fond hopes of glory or lasting fame,  
Or happiness in this or the other life. . . .  
All the unaccomplished works of Nature's hand,  
Abortive, monstrous, or unkindly mixed,  
Dissolved on Earth, fleet hither, and in vain,  
Till final dissolution, wander here—  
*Not in the neighbouring Moon, as some have dreamed*’.

But the contents of the dream were the same—

‘ Then might ye see  
Cows, hoods, and habits, with their wearers, tost  
And fluttered into rags ; then reliques, beads,  
Indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls,  
The sport of winds : all these, upwhirled aloft,  
Fly o'er the backside of the World, far off  
Into a Limbo large and broad, since called  
The Paradise of Fools’.

Dames, knights, arms, loves, courtesies, and adventures, combined in poetry of supreme expression, and inset with exquisite tales, might seem enough for delight. But there were those who came after Ariosto who asked for more than he had proffered. Northern

Italianate writers not long after the Italian poet's death were ready either to read too much into him or to restrict their own flight to his compass. They made the generous mistake of confusing their more practical purpose with Ariosto's purely artistic aim. Thus, in 1591, Sir John Harington, his English translator, insisted that *Orlando Furioso* was a mine of moral allegory ; and Edmund Spenser, writing to Sir Walter Raleigh, endowed Orlando with the qualities of ' a good governour and a vertuous man '. It may be. Or they may have misread him. For Ariosto himself was innocent of these sublimities—

' Between Orlando and Rinaldo late  
There fell about Angelica some brawl,  
And each of them began the tother hate,  
This lady's love had made them both so thrall.  
But Charles, who much dislikes that such debate  
Between such friends should rise, on cause so small,  
To Namus of Buvier in keeping gave her,  
And suffered neither of them both to have her.

' But promised he would presently bestow  
The damsel fair on him that, in that fight,  
The plainest proof should of his prowess show,  
And danger most the Pagans with his might.'

This was all that Ariosto undertook to sing ; and because he sang his theme with such surpassing skill, his rare gifts of external grace moved later poets to envy and despair, and even threatened, as we shall see, to retard the original springs of the genius of Elizabethan poetry. They dig in vain who dig for moral allegory in Boiardo's more perfect successor. Art, not morality, set the standard of Ariosto's romance of Roland mad. ' All the affinities of its style ', says Addington Symonds,

' are with the ruling art of Italy [painting] ; and the poet [Ariosto] is less a singer uttering his soul forth to the world in song, than an artist painting a multitude of images with words instead of colours.

His power of delineation never fails him. Through the lucid medium of exquisitely chosen language we see the object as clearly as he saw it. . . . The stage is never empty; scene melts into scene without breathing-space or interruption; but lest the show should weary by its continuity, the curtain is let down upon each canto's closing, and the wizard who evolves these phantoms for our pleasure stands before it for a moment and discourses wit and wisdom to his audience. It is this all-embracing universally illuminating faculty of vision that justifies Galileo's epithet of the Divine for Ariosto ' <sup>1</sup>.

Re-crossing the Alps once more, and, turning northwards from Italy, let us consider, in the place of individual writers, some of the

## II. KINDS OF LITERATURE

which flourished in this age.

A time was to come in the eighteenth century when Count Roland's trumpet-call sounded the romantic réveillé, and Wieland, for example, in Germany cried in the very spirit of Ariosto—

' Now once more saddle me my hippogriff, o ye Muses,  
And away to the old romantical land ! '

But that new dawn of wonder was not yet. Orlando's romantic madness, the magie, the adventure, the enchantment, the love of Bradamante for Ruggiero, Angelica at the Court of Cathay, Astolfo's journeyings in Moonland, all Ariosto's courtesies and arms, were removed by leagues of difference from the homelier and more familiar ways by which writers outside Italy were travelling out of the Middle Ages.

<sup>1</sup> *Renaissance in Italy*, Part II, chap. ix.

Thus, a smell not of moonlight but of lamplight was exhaled by a certain school of poets, known in Germany as

### MEISTERSINGER,

Mastersingers, and as Rhetoricians in the Netherlands and France (*Rederijkers*, *Rhétoriqueurs*). Far behind Ariosto in invention, they were like him in their devotion to the cultivation of the native tongues, and in their incurious attitude towards the world without. We noted on an earlier page how the courtly Minnesong of Germany gradually changed its tone. The centre of social gravity shifted from the knights to the burghers, and little songs of rustic amours and little satires of town life began to oust the monopoly and monotony of

‘ A man, a woman—woman, man :  
Tristan, Isold—Isold, Tristan ! ’

A certain Heinrich of Mayence, who died in 1318, was the first of the line of knightly Minnesingers to acknowledge a master-Minnesinger as the head of his choir, and thus to admit the recognition of a singing-guild with members and rules. The recognition implied a common meeting-place, and convenience itself ordained that the singing-guilds and the trade-guilds should coincide, so that gradually the Meister-singer-diploma was derived from a trade-qualification, such as that of master-smith, master-weaver, and so forth. The wandering minstrel of former days, who went from castle to castle, or who was attached to a baronial court, gave way, as intercourse developed, to the craftsman moving from town to town, and finding hospitality and entertainment in the circle of his own trade.

These trade-guilds of Mastersong spread. The Mayence school was still flourishing at the end of the eighteenth century, and there were even later

survivors. But their period of chief activity under a strict code of laws was between 1450 and 1650. They admitted five classes of membership, graded according to proficiency : apprentices, associates, singers, composers, masters. The masters elected the committee, who appointed a marker and assessors, charged with guarding the *Tablatur* (code of laws), and symbolic prizes of chains and wreaths were awarded according to their judgment. Beer-gardens after working hours and the town-hall on Sunday afternoons were the chief scenes of Meistersong displays, which plainly promoted good-fellowship, decent music, a taste for letters, and even a wholesome competition between trades and towns.

Mastersong first broke its bounds and passed into the realm of literature in the pleasant, homely writings of Hans Sachs (1494-1576). Sachs was a cobbler-poet, familiar on the stage in Wagner's opera, who spent a long and happy life on the sunny side of an old street in Nuremberg. There he brought up a large family by two wives, and plied his last and his lyre. His distance from the big events moving to fulfilment in Germany may be measured by his reference to Martin Luther in 1523 as 'the nightingale of Wittenberg'; surely the boldest nightingale that ever sang out of covert at noonday. Sachs typifies the amiable complacency and the well-nigh anti-social faith, which it was Luther's mission to destroy, and his writings were as tranquil as his life. There is sound sense in the unkind epigram of a German critic : Sachs made a poem out of everything, but made nothing into a poem. According to his own computation, his 'mastersongs' numbered 4,275; his tales and fables over 1,700; his Biblical plays, interludes and battle-pieces (which he called comedies and tragedies), 208; and there were miscellaneous verses besides.

Selection out of this plenty is difficult. Sachs ransacked all the romance-quarries, and drew his chief inspiration from the Bible. So far, Luther was justified. But Sachs's treatment of the Bible proved that he had something to learn of holiness as well as homeliness in beauty. We may exemplify the play (Sachs's stage-talent was rudimentary) which he contrived out of the legend of Eve's favourite children (*die ungleichen Kinder Evas*). The story had attracted several Humanists. Melancthon had told it in Germany, Mantuan in Italy, and Alexander Barclay, a Scottish poet, to whose labours on foreign literature we shall have occasion to return, had told it again in an eclogue, *The Citizen and the Uplandman*, 1514. What Sachs brought was a new way of telling : dramatic touches, a jog-trot measure, and a sense of ease with God. He shows us Adam and Eve surrounded by a troop of children on a German upland farm. One day notice arrives that God, a sort of landlord-overseer, is to pay them a visit, and Adam fussily superintends Eve's housewifely preparations. The good children are dressed and drilled, and the naughty are kept in the background. When the rewards of good behaviour have been distributed, Eve, seeing the Lord so gracious, ventures to bring in the naughty lot too. God is heartily amused at their rough manners and unkempt appearance. He allots these to menial callings in various trades and crafts, and the parents, disappointed at the difference in the blessings bestowed, are reminded that all service is equal in His eyes. The moral is excellent, and it accords with old-time sentiment and taste ; but neither in matter nor manner did the most eminent Meistersinger of Germany show that he was stirred at all deeply by the forces moving in his day. It is an effort to imagine Sachs as the contemporary of Machiavelli and Ariosto, and of Rabelais, to whom we shall come.



Yet, if Sachs is disappointing in his range, he was at least a lovable writer and a good type of inglenook poet. Nothing half as sensible or durable came out of the cult of

#### THE ' RHETORICIANS '.

The Dutch *Kamers*, or chambers, of Rhetoric were formed on the pattern of German schools of Master-song, and they did good work for the encouragement of poets. The name of Anna Bijns (1493-1595), for example, may be mentioned as a venerable kind of Hans Sachs in Holland. We may select, too, the *Oude* (Old) *Kamer*, known as the Eglantine of Amsterdam, for the sake of the part which it was to take in the development of the national drama. To this we return in a later chapter. But, on the whole, these guilds were content to play a modest rôle, with a taste for convivial gatherings, and with a very distinct tendency to make too much of form and authority in composition.

Their vices were still more prominent in the French *grands rhétoriciens*. The name first occurs in a set of verses by Guillaume Coquillart (died 1570), and it suits as well as any other a class of sciolists who wrote down to the false creed that how they said it was more important than what they said. Mechanical singing-birds by trade, they gathered at the sheltered Courts of Charles VIII and Louis XII of France, and were as ready to lay down rules as to illustrate them by poetic exercises. They were steeped in the old tradition of the *Roman de la Rose*, and, now that its running-power was exhausted, they took down the engine and polished the parts to look like new. This process was called aureation, for the polish was a kind of Latin gilding which glittered but was not gold. A French critic of our day admirably characterizes

*Rhétorique* as the fine art of saying nothing <sup>1</sup>, and points out that its tormented rhyme-systems, its regular meanderings of alliteration, and its verbal audacities were brought to so high a pitch that a poem might appeal to eye or ear in twenty different ways without carrying a meaning to the brain. We need not linger in these twisted paths. It was high time for the Pleiad to get at work and straighten out the resources of the French language ; high time, too, for Rabelais to drive before him the whole crew of affected poetasters with one blast of irresistible ridicule.

The names are very insignificant. A native model was the Frenchman, Alain Chartier (c. 1394-c. 1450), whose life has the meretricious interest of a tale retold by Alfred de Musset. Chartier served his country as ambassador to Scotland, and it is related that the Princess Margaret, who afterwards married King Louis XI of France, kissed the poet asleep in his chair, explaining that she saluted the golden words, not the ugly lips which had uttered them. It may be. The gold and the lips mingle their dust to-day. Neither Chartier's *Curial* (Court-Life), which Caxton translated, nor his pedantic ballads and rondels survive poet or princess. A little more literary interest attaches to Guillaume Crétin (died 1525), historical poet to King Francis I. The epithet 'Cretinism' has been given to the class of poetry which he wrote, and he is identified with the 'old French poet' of Rabelais (*Pantagruel*, III, 21), who seared him and his like under the name of Raminagrobis. He wrote *ballades*, *chants-royaux*, and other 'sweet-shop stuff' (*épiceries*, later satire called it) with

<sup>1</sup> 'Rhétorique : art de bien dire. Pour eux bien dire c'est dire autrement que le vulgaire ; plus on sera ingénieux et compliqué, plus on sera loin de vulgaire et mieux on aura dit. Les sons et les mots avant tout, la pensée ensuite ; leur art de bien dire devient ainsi, la plupart du temps, un art de ne rien dire.'—Jusserand, *Ronsard*, p. 31.

complexities of rhyme and metre of the utmost rhetorical ingenuity. The last of these writers whom we shall mention is Pierre Gringore (or Gringoire), who was about twenty-five years of age at the century's turn. Apart from his exercises in allegory which tarred him with the brush of Cretinism, Gringore was a strolling actor-manager and a sort of general pamphleteer. In his former capacity he deserved well of the rudimentary art out of which the new drama was being hatched, and, in the latter, his *Folles Entreprises* have been described as embryonic journalism.

We come back for a moment to Hans Sachs.

There were not wanting moralists in Europe who deplored the spread of shallow learning and sought to restore the old paths. Was there luxury? Lead the simple life. Were riches sought? Poverty was more honourable. Were professors tedious? Con the Bible. Particularly, this moral attitude of reactionary reform had a vogue in the German middle-classes, who offered a stout opposition to the pretensions of theology and the speculations of science. That the middle way made mediocre literature is proved by the homely poet who cobbled shoes at Nuremberg for sixty years. For Sachs might have said with Wordsworth, if he had had an equal sense of form—

‘The homely beauty of the good old cause  
Is gone, our peace, our fearful innocence,  
And pure religion breathing household laws’.

Meanwhile, the fashion arose of postponing the defeat of the ‘old cause’ by satirizing the new. Champions of blissful ignorance represented learning as vanity, and the Hans Sachs type was exalted by deriding the rest as fools. This temporary literature of

#### FOLLY

acquired importance and popularity; and an excellent start was made by Sebastian Brandt (1458, 1521), whose *Narrenschiff*, or ‘shipload of Fools,’

appeared in 1494. Brandt had the happy thought of sending his fools afloat on one of those voyages of discovery so attractive in the age of Navigation. His shipload, it must be acknowledged, was a fairly miscellaneous crew, collected mainly from Scriptural ports, and herded indiscriminately on board. But by impressing actual men and women in preference to the abstract vices beloved by medieval allegorists, he took a step in advance, which rose by natural gradations to the 'essay' of a Bacon and the character-sketch of a La Bruyère. Moreover, the text had woodcuts, and the draughtsman's art pointed and adorned the didactic purpose of the satirist. Humanists quickly saw the value of this product of middle-class sentiment; and the relation of Brandt's *Narrenschiff*, soon translated into Latin verse, to the exposure of monkish folly in the Erfurt 'Letters of Obscure Men' is palpable and direct.

There were other German satirists in this epoch, so rich in the contrasts of experience on which the art of satire battens; Thomas Murner (1475-1537), for example, wrote a *Gauchmatte* ('Fools-mead') and a 'Great Lutheran Fool' (1522), which earned him considerable notoriety. And the cult spread from Germany to other countries. Locher's Latin version of the *Narrenschiff* was rendered into English by Barclay, whose acquisitiveness, as we saw, was valuable, and a *Cock Lorell's Boat* (c. 1510) was an English variant on the same theme. Even Erasmus wrote a Folly-book (*Encomium Moriae*), 1511. He dedicated it to Sir Thomas More, and, later, it was illustrated by Dürer; and these emblem-books, as they came to be called when they grew into a distinct branch of literature, are associated from the first with the Folly vogue.

Obviously, there was scope for rough humour as well as for plain speaking in Folly-satire. Humanists

seized it as a weapon to attack pedantry and ignorance, while less sophisticated readers were attracted chiefly by the horseplay. A similar double appeal is made by Aristophanes and Dean Swift, and, on a rather different plane, by Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books.

It was the coarser element, on the whole, which was developed in this age by the

#### FOLKBOOKS,

or *Volksbücher*, native to German soil ; and some of the popular tales, afloat in legends of the countryside, were now worked up into moral versions.

A typical folk-tale hero was Tyll, a merry Saxon boor, whose rogue's odyssey of adventure became the *Eulenspiegel* of 1483. The name means, literally, Owl-glass, and was so used in the English translation effected by William Copland ; and the glass, whatever its further meaning, was held up to the rougher aspects of common life in German workshops and beer-shops. There is very little fun in it to-day, but the countryman's shrewd mother-wit split the fat sides of German burghers at the close of the fifteenth century.

Passing over *The Parson of Kalenborow* (from the *Pfarrer von Kalenberg*), c. 1510, and *Papa Amis* (from *Pfaffe Amis*), a few words of recognition are due to a singularly unpleasant folk-hero, known for two centuries as Grobian. *Grobe Leute* is German for rude people, and Brandt's *Ship* had invented Grobianus as patron-saint of this fraternity. In 1538 appeared a treatise on Grobian's table-manners. Eleven years later a Latin *Grobianus* was composed by Friedrich Dedekind, and it gained nothing in savour by a German translation, 1556. Then Dedekind rewrote it all in German, under the title *Grobianus und Grobiana*, and in this complete manual

of the subject no known aspect of grossness was left to be explored. The type and the name caught on. It was an age when courtiers' manners were more than half the wealth of courts, and French and English variants on the theme (Thomas Dekker's *Gull's Hornbook*, for example) found readers and applause. As late as 1739 a *Grobianus, or The Complete Booby*, was inscribed to Swift by Roger Bull, and the *Verdant Green* books of yesterday (or the day before) are really in the line of descent from the adventures of the first Grobian among the exquisites.

Roger Bacon, the learned Schoolman, under the style of Friar Bacon, supplied a jest-book of Alchemy. A *geste* of the greenwood was furnished by tales of Robin Hood and Maid Marian (the *Robin et Marion* of old French pastorals), and a strange little folk-book was written round the adventures of the Mass. Dialogues on the sickness, death, last will and testament of the Mass were hawked around German towns in the first third of the sixteenth century, and show to how low a level religious quarrels had degraded literary taste.

More permanent interest belongs to three folk-tales of local origin. (1) Almost since the dawn of Christianity the tale was told of the shoemaker, Ahasuerus, who had refused a moment's rest to the Saviour as he watched the procession to Calvary. Since he had denied rest to Christ, Christ laid on him the curse never more to rest on earth; and once and again he had been seen on his endless, objectless pilgrimage. It was at Hamburg in 1547 that the *ewige Jude* was recognized by a Bishop of Schleswig, and the 'Wonderful Report' was quickly spread on German soil. Later versions of 'The Wandering Jew' followed in various tongues, and the legend



exemplified the moral that no exceptional exemption from normal conditions of time and space is competent to confer true happiness. (2) The same moral adorns the tale, more definitely German in origin, of the learned adventurer, Dr. Faust. The alleged doctor's date is given between 1500 and 1530, and it is obvious that Luther's fame, blackened by evil report, went to the making of the story. The first *Faust*-book was published in 1587 at Frankfort-on-Main, as 'The History of Dr. Johann Faust, the much-travelled Magician and Black-Artist, how he made a pact with the Devil for a certain period, what adventures he encountered and wrought during that time, and how at last he received his well-merited reward'—in hell. German, French, and English poets, the last including Marlowe and Greene, continued the treatment of the legend, which was finally utilized by Goethe to depict the Faust-hunger of the soul. Principally on Faust's account Germany ranked in the sixteenth century in popular English opinion as the home of magic and bedevilment, and the motive of a diabolic pact was added to the stock of dramatic plots. (3) Thirdly, the folk-book of *Fortunatus* was worked up in Germany out of native material grafted on to Italian *novelle*, and, maybe, some Spanish romances. It first took definite shape at Augsburg, 1509, and, again, 1530; and, crossing France and the Netherlands, it was treated in England by Thomas Dekker. *Fortunatus* is a fascinating tale of the adventures of a favourite of fortune and his son under the benevolent spell of the Black Art of alchemy; and the moral again held good that happiness thus founded does not endure.

A sweeter and lovelier kind, which, like Aphrodite, sprang full-grown from the foam of romance, was

known in Germany as *Volkslied*, in Spain as *Romance*, and in England and Scotland as the

### BALLAD.

‘Where were the ballads before they were made?’<sup>1</sup> is a question answered by experts with diminishing dogmatism as to the antiquity of the *genre*. They flourished in most countries in this age, and the theory that the ballads of Denmark, Spain, France, Britain, Germany, and the Scandinavian lands and islands were merely chips from the mass of old epic and chronicle, planed and chiselled to ballad form, is a very unlikely conclusion from the art of their shaping and their method of approach to the story-matters. Some of the *romances* of Castile, represented in Lockhart’s *Spanish Ballads*, may have originated in this way; but, generally, the ballad-writer, within the freemasonry of his craft, had his own angle of vision, and the ballad is to be ranked as a class apart from longer narratives in verse or prose. It is separate from them by an instinct of selection, then most conspicuously displayed when it happens to treat of the same plot. A high authority tells us of ballads, that

‘From one vice of modern literature they are free: they have no “thinking about thinking”, no feeling about feeling. They can tell a good tale. They are fresh with the open air; wind and sunshine play through them, and the distinction, old as criticism itself, which assigns them to nature rather than to art, is practical and sound’<sup>2</sup>.

The essence of a ballad, we infer, lies in the manner

<sup>1</sup> Special reference should be made to a paper *On the History of the Ballads, 1100-1500*, by W. P. Ker, in the Proceedings of the British Academy, December 15, 1909. The spontaneity of the Ballad as a branch of literature is an unmistakable characteristic.

<sup>2</sup> F. B. Gummere, in *Cambridge History of English Literature*, ii.

of its telling ; and this special manner of the ballad, so nearly and remarkably identical in so many different tongues ; this faculty of transmuting a story-matter and of showing it under a different aspect, gives the ballad its place and name in the literature of Europe.

One example, well read, will suffice. The Ballad of *Baby Lon* belongs by subject to no country. In the Scottish version it runs as follows—

## BABY LON.

There were three ladies lived in a bower,  
*Eh vow bonnie,*  
 And they went out to pull a flower  
*On the bonny banks o' Fordie.*  
 They hadna pu'd a flower but ane,  
 When up started to them a banisht man.  
 He's taen the first sister by the hand,  
 And he's turned her round and made her stand.  
 ' It's whether will ye be a rank robber's wife,  
 Or will ye die by my wee pen-knife ? '  
 ' It's I'll not be a rank robber's wife,  
 But I'll rather die by your wee pen-knife '.  
 He's killed this *may*, and he's laid her by, (maid)  
 For to bear the red rose company.  
 He's taen the second ane by the hand,  
 And he's turned her round and made her stand.  
 ' It's whether will ye be a rank robber's wife,  
 Or will ye die by my wee pen-knife ? '  
 ' I'll not be a rank robber's wife,  
 But I'll rather die by your wee pen-knife '.  
 He's killed this *may*, and he's laid her by,  
 For to keep the red rose company.  
 He's taen the youngest ane by the hand,  
 And he's turned her round and made her stand.  
 Says, ' Will ye be a rank robber's wife,  
 Or will ye die by my wee pen-knife ? '  
 ' I'll not be a rank robber's wife,  
 Nor will I die by your wee pen-knife.  
 For I hae a brother in this wood,  
 And gin ye kill me, it's he'll kill thee '.  
 ' What's thy brother's name, come tell to me '.  
 ' My brother's name is Baby Lon '.  
 ' O Sister, Sister, what have I done !  
 O have I done this ill to thee !  
 O since I've done this evil deed,  
 Good sall never be seen o' me '.  
 He's taken out his wee pen-knife,  
*Eh vow bonnie !*  
 And he's twyned himsel o' his ain sweet life,  
*On the bonnie banks o' Fordie.*

To annotate a ballad is to spoil it, but the reader will observe, among common features of the kind, the brevity and condensation of treatment, the heightening of emphasis by repetition, the characteristic ballad-burden or refrain, and the haunting music of the whole composition. The directness of narration is obvious. There is neither preparation nor commentary in the effects prepared by ballad-writers. All the romance of outlawry is in the epithet 'a banisht man'. Chapters of family history are contained in the act of recognition, 'O sister, sister'. There is no interval between thought and speech in the statement, 'He's killed this may and laid her by'; and it is superfluous to remark on the singular beauty of the line—

' For to keep the red rose company '.

Verses like this are natural to the ballad. They are struck out of the heart of song, like a jet of water from a rock.

We may call the ballad a folk-tale in verse, but no definition is quite adequate to a form of literature which has kept the mystery of its origin as well as the secret of its charm. It has kept, too, the secret of its authorship. The ballads are nearly always anonymous. They treat of familiar topics in the stock of European romance, or in the separate national repertories. The story had to be familiar, for so much of its background was taken for granted. Especially, perhaps, the border-fighting on the Hispano-Moorish or Anglo-Scottish frontier, with its appeal to riven domestic sentiment, supplied favourite episodes to ballad-writers. But nothing came amiss to their art. They seized a new or an old theme, provided always that it was popular, and transformed it in size and scope to the hidden purpose of the ballad.

The bibliography is interesting. Specimens of Danish ballads were collected by Vedel in the sixteenth, by Syv in the seventeenth, and by Grundvig in the nineteenth century. Spanish collections were made in the *Romancero general* of 1600 (Madrid) and in similar subsequent compilations, much aided by the researches of such eminent scholars as Hegel, Grimm, Southey, Lockhart, and Wolf in the past, Menendez of Pelayo, Foulché-Delbosc and Fitzmaurice-Kelly in the recent present. Nor should the Spanish song-books, starting with a *Cancionero* by Juan Alfonso de Baena, c. 1450, be forgotten as ballad-material. Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 1882-98, is still the chief source-book for our own country, and Scottish writers, notably Scott and Andrew Lang, have always been eager exponents. Valuable collections and commentaries have been made, too, in France and Germany, the poet Uhland being conspicuous in his own country; and there is a vast Russian ballad-literature still awaiting systematic exploration.

Lastly, we come to a kind of writings, composed in the vernacular tongues during the transit of literature through 1492, which differs conspicuously from the ballad by its long (and somewhat tedious) initiation.

There is no real beginning to modern

#### DRAMA.

A recent critic, Mr. Edmund Gardner, tells us that the birthday of Italian drama was January 25, 1486, and his statement is supported by good evidence at the Duke of Ferrara's Court. But elements of drama pre-existed in the *pastourelle* of the French Troubadours, where a knight made love to a shepherd's wife; in the *débat*, or *jeu parti*, or 'strife', which

passed into ' dialogues ' in prose and verse ; in the *pregunta*, or question-and-answer of popular Spanish poetry, and in a score of different modes by which the imitative faculty, always inherent in mankind, sought literary expression. How to get the interplay of characters on to an actual stage, however rudely furnished for representation, was a problem solved *ambulando* by village carpenters and strolling players, wholly unconscious, no doubt, that they were inventing dramatic art.

In the Latin-Italian age, inaugurated by Lorenzo the Magnificent, the prince-patrons encouraged the court-poets to organize masques and pageants ; and we saw that Machiavelli at Florence, Ariosto at Ferrara, and others, including writers at the Spanish Court of Naples, produced on improvised stages dramatic scenes adapted from Latin comedies. These served to familiarize modern audiences with the situation-plots of Terence and Plautus, and with clear outlines of the characters on which changes of comedy were rung. The heavy father, the nimble-witted servant, the persecuted lovers, and the unscrupulous go-between were regular and recurring types.

Roman tragedy, too, was drawn upon. Chiefly, Seneca was the favourite model, and, consequently, a taste was engendered for baths of blood and wholesale slaughter, not wholly disused by Shakespeare in the concluding Act of *Hamlet*.

An early Italian writer in this kind was Giovanni Rucellai (1475-1525), who had the honour of producing a play, with the appropriate five Acts and a Chorus, before Pope Leo X on his visit to Florence in 1515. The name of this tragedy was *Rosmunda*, and Rucellai was so faithful to the Senecan tradition, that his drama is said on high authority to have ' led the way to those accumulations of horrible and disgusting



circumstances, which deformed the European stage for a century afterwards' <sup>1</sup>. A more important feature of *Rosmunda* was the use of blank verse (*versi sciolti*, loose or released verse), now first applied in a modern language to dramatic or narrative poetry.

Almost simultaneous with *Rosmunda* was the *Sofonisba* of Giovanni Trissino (1478-1550), likewise composed without rhymes. Trissino, who wrote a dreary epos known as *Italia Liberata*, and whose name we shall meet on a later page among the writers on poetics, went for dramatic inspiration to the Greek tragedians as well as to Seneca, and so avoided a part of the worse faults of that model.

Yet another dramatic experiment was the Latin university-play, which employed especially the talents of leading Humanists in the North. It rang variations on the theme of the Prodigal Son, for the edification of youthful students and for the rough humour of the whipping-scenes. The *Stylpho*, 1470, of Wimpfeling, the German schoolmaster, was among the earliest of this kind; the *Rebelles* of Georg Langveldt (c. 1475-1558), a Dutchman, commonly known as Macropedius, was among the most amusing; and the *Acolastus* (unchastised) of Willem Volder (1493-1558), another Dutchman, known as Fullonius or Gnapheus, was amongst the most famous, and was rendered into English by John Palsgrave. Other writers in this class included George Buchanan, Reuchlin, and Sixt Birck, a schoolmaster at Basle, whose scholar's name was Betuleius, and whose Christian-Terentian plays dealt with *Susannah*, *Judith*, and *Eva*—the Eve who made favourites among her children.

More notable in a vanished kind was the Latin playwright, Thomas Kirchmayer (1511-63), a Thuringian pastor, commonly known as Neogeorg. The

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *op. cit.*

name was derived from his new *Georgics*, or 'Book of Spiritual Husbandry' (*Agricultura sacra*), 1550. His militant drama, *Pammachius*, which was dedicated to the Archbishop of Canterbury, has been described as a typical Reformation play. It had the crudely novel device of leaving Act V, the second coming of the Saviour, to the sympathetic imagination of the audience.

To the same imagination, sympathetic or the reverse, we may commit the whole class of these Latin plays. We look in another direction, forwards, instead of backwards to the Classics, for a more spontaneous response to a more popular taste for drama. Not at universities and courts, but in market-places and on village-greens, and chiefly at times of public holiday when folk were ready to be amused, showmen sought that gallery applause, on which every play in every age depends finally for success. Learned societies contributed something; classical models contributed something more, and a number of rules, as we shall see, were derived by Italian critics from Aristotle's theory of poetics. But the true origin of drama, it is of prime importance to remember, was popular, even plebeian, and its chief inspiration was sought by the simple test of what pleased.

Popular, even plebeian. But these words, before the Reformation, implied a third epithet—ecclesiastical. The pleasures of the people in the Middle Ages arose out of and were bound up with the Church. Public holidays were almost necessarily Church festivals; and if we can imagine British drama tied to the ear of a *religious* Lord Mayor's Show, we shall see how Church-pageantry and music gave birth to drama in the South.

Instead of London in November, imagine Florence at midsummer. On St. John's Day, June 22,

spectacular tableaux were organized by the princes of the Florentine Republic, and the *laudi*, or sacred hymns of praise, were gradually developed into *divozioni*, with mingled dialogue and action, and so into *sacre rappresentazioni*, or scenes from Biblical stories.

The first of such Italian sacred plays which is known by author and subject is Feo Belcari's *Abraham and Isaac*, 1449. More interesting is *Santa Uliva*, an anonymous specimen, written probably a hundred years earlier than its first printed edition, 1568. Uliva was a late saint, and her introduction in a *sacra rappresentazione* is a significant proof of the widening hospitality of the kind. Chaucer and Gower wrote of Uliva, who came from the legends of Court-chivalry, and whose later halo was the meed of the pity which the sorrows of her lifetime inspired. Thus, the spectacular element was more important than the sacred. In the eyes of the religious brotherhoods, who undertook to run these performances, the play was the thing from the start; and, provided the story was effective, a thin coating of pietism satisfied the requirements of the Church. We have to realize the universality of the Church, its presence and immanence in all experience, in order to see how it happened that lay, or secular, drama lay so long in an ecclesiastical cradle. It was like an infant Hercules struggling to get free; and the 'glaring contrast' which Addington Symonds pointed out 'between the professed asceticism of the [dramatic] fraternities and the future conduct of their youthful members in the world of the Renaissance', however nauseating to observe, was not unwholesome in the circumstances. If playwrights were to win release from the sacred surroundings of their origin, a contrast of this kind was hardly avoidable. The *sacre rappresentazioni* died out at last in painted pageants; but they gave

hospitality in their flowering-time to much scenic talent of future promise and to some excellent dramatic dialogue in octave stanzas.

Even narrower was the border-line between sacred and profane in the analogous passion-plays of Germany. In 'Eve's favourite children' we saw how quickly German wit seized the humour of the homelier Bible stories; and Noah and similar characters provided other examples. The narrow passage was bridged by the *Fastnachtspiel*, or Shrovetide-play, which the excellent Hans Sachs would write you as easily as cobble your shoe; and in this slight and artless composition the Scriptural element was reduced to a minimum. It just served to keep German drama on the right side of authority, while allowing ample room for mundane wit and worldly wisdom. Strolling players, known as mimes or histrions, took a selection of plays (like the bag of the old *jongleurs*) from village to village at Shrovetide, and their entertainment, best described as jolly, enjoyed the protection of the Church.

In France, too, the *Confrérie de la Passion*, with its headquarters in Paris, performed much the same function as the religious-dramatic brotherhoods in Florence. They had a theatre at the Hôpital de la Ste. Trinité from 1402 to 1539, when it passed into abler hands; but even before the latter date its managers were glad to ally themselves with the so-called *Enfants sans Souci*, otherwise known as *les Sots*, whose business was to write *sottie française*, or pure farce unadulterated with piety.

From the various groups of French dramatists at least one comedy emerged, not unworthy of the art which Molière was to adorn. *Maître Pierre Pathelin*, more commonly known as *Pathelin*, has been ascribed doubtfully to Antoine de la Salle, and was imprinted at Lyons in 1485. The play is written in verses of

eight syllables, and its bright and amusing plot turns on a practical joke. A country lawyer advises his client to try bleating like a sheep when at loss for a better answer, and the jest is turned against the lawyer when he comes for his fee. The judge's 'revenons à nos moutons' is a familiar tag from this play, which enjoyed and deserved long esteem, and which was modernized in the seventeenth century as *L'Avocat Pathelin*. Its legal setting suggests its origin in a dramatic society, the *Basoches*, founded for mutual entertainment by the clerks of the Paris Law Courts.

The German *Fastnachtspiel* was the Spanish *Auto* (= *actum*, or Act of the Sacrament), still in vogue in 1765, when it was prohibited by royal decree. Its long and splendid career in the country farthest from the Reformation attracted the greatest writers in Spain, and Calderon, as we shall see, ranked as its new creator. Briefly, the *Auto* took shape as a one-act dramatic presentation of the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist, and it was played in the open air on Corpus Christi day. It ranged from the rude performances furnished by pious village folk to the most magnificent masque which Church and State could organize in Madrid. Three names occur in the present period, worthy of mention in ascent to Calderon. (1) Juan Eseriva, a native of Valencia, and a well-known songsmith of his age, wrote 'A Complaint by his Lady against the God of Love', which ranks high among dramatic beginnings. (2) Juan del Enzina (1469-c. 1530) played in the chapel of Pope Leo X at Rome. His dramatic eclogues or *representaciones* were dramas in the vital sense that they were put on a stage and enacted in the year 1492 and onwards. Slight and insipid as they appear in their treatment of the conventional topics of the Passion, Christmas, etc., yet they form an important landmark in the

history of the art. (3) Bartolomé de Torres Naharro also resided at Rome, till a lampoon on the Papal Court caused him to move to Naples. There he wrote eight Spanish comedies which were played on private stages and afterwards put into print, though it does not appear that they actually reached the theatre. Their importance is literary rather than dramatic. Naharro worked out for his own guidance a complete theory of his craft. He adopted from Horace the division of a play into five parts (he called them days, *jornadas*, not acts), and he limited his personages to not less than six nor more than twelve. He was a skilful, even an elaborate metrist, and a like elaboration is observed in his employment of appropriate dialects. Naharro classified plays into comedies *a noticia* (founded on knowledge) and comedies *a fantasia* (founded on fancy): a distinction admirably pointed in Milton's well-known verses—

‘ If Jonson’s learned sock be on,  
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy’s child,  
Warble his native wood-notes wild’.

Naharro, too, may claim the invention—certainly he first made it famous—of the part of the *gracioso*, or confidential servant, of social comedy, perfected in the *Figaro* of Beaumarchais. Another stage-innovation, which traces descent from Naharro, was the dramatic *punctilio*, or point of honour, binding characters to a conventional course of action, whatever its personal consequences, and this feature governed the theatre of the greater Spanish masters, Lope de Vega and Calderon.

In Spain, as in France, in this age, at least one play was written which contained the seed of future triumphs. The prose comedy of *Calisto and Melibea* dates roughly from 1490, and is thus contemporary with *Pathelin*. An edition was published at Seville



in 1501. A few years later it was reissued as a 'tragi-comedy', which more aptly describes its scope; and an Italian edition, 1519, re-entitled the tragi-comedy *Celestina*, after the name of its principal character.

*Celestina* is not a pleasant play. The *dramatis personae* enlighten us as to its topics—

CALISTO, a young enamoured gentleman.	CELESTINA, an old bawd.
MELIBEA, daughter to Pleberio.	CRITO, a pander.
PLEBERIO, father to Melibea.	LUCRECIA, maid to Pleberio.
ALISA, mother to Melibea.	ELICIA } in Crito's employ.
PARMENO }	AREUSA }
SEMPRONIO } servants to Calisto.	CENTURIO, a ruffian.
TRISTAN }	SOSIA, servant to Calisto.

James Mabbe, who wrote an English version as early as 1631, declared that it contained 'profitable instructions necessary for the younger sort', who were to 'learn thereby to distinguish between good and bad, and praise the author though not the practice; for these things are written more for reprehension than for imitation'. It is a specious argument, but not particularly convincing. *Celestina*, let us say at once, brought down the setting of romance, as Villon had brought it down in France, from the region of chivalry and fable to the common earth on which we dwell. Calisto and Melibea, tragic lovers, were own children to old Juan Ruiz, and were in the straight line of ascent to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. The comic element was supplied by the 'old bawd', and she, too, traced descent from Juan Ruiz's convent go-between, and reappeared in Juliet's nurse. Her racy idioms passed into current speech, and, despite her libertine tongue, the realism and roguery of her part found frequent and diligent imitators.

We may pass over some questions of bibliography. The author of *Celestina* is not known. Opinion inclines to the claim of Fernando de Rojas, whose

name occurs in a sentence ('The bachelor Fernando de Rojas completed the comedy of Calisto and Melibea and he was born in the town of Montalvan'), constructed out of the first letters of the eighty-eight verses prefixed to the Seville edition. If so, *Celestina*, like *Pathelin*, was written by a lawyer; and, since Rojas was a Jew, we should in this case 'be presented with a striking triumph of the Jewish genius' <sup>1</sup>. A subsidiary problem arises out of the word 'completed'. There were sixteen acts in the 1501 edition, and five more were subsequently added, and separate authors have been attributed to Act I, Acts II to XVI, and Acts XVII to XXI, with sundry details of dovetailing.

It has, further, an after-bibliography. A Spanish poet, Pedro Manuel de Urrea, published a song-book in 1513, which contained a verse-rendering of Act I of *Celestina*. In the following year he wrote in prose a *Penitencia de Amor*, which covered *Celestina*'s naked realism with a cloak of antique chivalry. Another of *Celestina*'s moral lovers was John Rastell, an English printer, who died in 1536. Rastell married Elizabeth, sister to Sir Thomas More. Their daughter Elizabeth was married to John Heywood, and Heywood's daughter Elizabeth was married to John Donne. This triple relationship in letters enhances the interest of Rastell's work in the early history of romantic drama. In 1530 he published 'A New Comedy in English, in manner of an Interlude, right

<sup>1</sup> J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *Littérature espagnole*, p. 170. Prof. Kelly is disposed to accept the attribution of *Celestina* to Rojas. The great authority of M. Foulché-Delbosc (*Revue hispanique*, vi, 1900, resumed 1902) arrived at three conclusions: (a) that the original sixteen acts were all written by one author; (b) that this author cannot be identified; and (c) that he did not write the later additions. H. Warner Allen (*Celestina*, 1908) reverts to the Rojas authorship of (a); and, as to the five later acts, Prof. Kelly reminds us: 'Les retouches d'un auteur sont souvent malheureuses'. On the whole, it is convenient to accept a view which was unshaken from 1501 to 1900.

elegant and full of craft of rhetoric, wherein is showed and described as well the Beauty and Good Properties of Women as their Vices and Evil Conditions ; with a moral conclusion and an exhortation to Virtue '. The conclusion and exhortation were new, but the verse-drama of over a thousand lines was adapted from Acts I-IV of the Spanish tragic-comedy of *Celestina*, and, under its short title of *Calisto and Melibea*, it marks a distinct step forward in the development of the Elizabethan theatre.

We shall reach that theatre in a later chapter, and shall see in it the consummation of the Renaissance. Meanwhile, dramatic origins in England followed the same course as in other countries. We are to distinguish between Miracle-plays, derived chiefly from the Legends of the Saints, Mystery-plays, derived chiefly from the Bible, and Moralities, or Interludes, founded on the rich soil of allegory.

In this last class a famous specimen is *Everyman*, an allegory of men's common fate of death, written in or about 1490, and partly Dutch by descent. Reference, too, is due to the national or historical drama, which sprang from the homely performances played on village-greens. Thus, May-day in England made stage-plays out of the adventures of Robin Hood, whose fame we noted in ballad-literature ; and other heroes of legend and jest-books, and other social and moral influences, tended at last to the divorce of secular drama from the Church.

Here, at the dawn of the sixteenth century, we are struck chiefly by the insignificance and unobtrusiveness of the theatre which Shakespeare's genius was to enhance before the century's close.

## CHAPTER VI.

### Europe at School.

WE are still a long way from Shakespeare. The lofty and aspiring minds which threaded the straits of the Renaissance, and sought the open sea of the sixteenth century, were still a long way from the perception of *Hamlet*, Act II, Scene ii, that man is the centre of a universe, where he creates his own heaven and his own hell—

‘ This goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this bright o’erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man ! how noble in reason ! how infinite in faculty ! in form and moving how express and admirable ! in action how like an angel ! in apprehension how like a God ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals ! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust ? Man delights not me : no, nor woman neither ’.

The teachers of Europe at this date, when all Europe was at school, took two main roads towards the light which illumines Hamlet’s chart. One was the road of the Humanists, the other that of the Reformers ; and, though the two roads ran parallel, and even touched at many points, the Reformers were chiefly concerned with the release of religious dogma from authority, while the Humanists bent their

efforts on the release of secular learning. To the Reformers, the freedom of the Bible; to the Humanists, the freedom of the Classics; to both alike, intellectual freedom was the goal and object of desire.

Modern observers see clearly that the very intensity of this desire imposed a fresh series of restrictions. The way of the German Renaissance led, we remarked, through the Wars of the Reformation; and hardly less bellicose in spirit, nor much more moderate in counsel, was the path of many

### I. LATER HUMANISTS.

They, too, laid a yoke on the intellect. These true believers in the Ancients, as the surest guides out of the Middle Ages, were so loyal and fervent in their worship as to hamper and even to postpone the free working of man's noble reason, which Shakespeare was to exhibit in every phase. The secularization of literature meant not only its release from Rome in the sense of the Roman Church, but also, in the end, its release from Rome in the sense of the Greek and Latin classics. As early as 1528 the *Ciceronianus* of Erasmus, which ridiculed the excesses of Humanists, was as keen and necessary a satire as the *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*, which ridiculed, as we have seen, the defective education of the monks.

There were great Humanists in this age. So great was one of them, for example, that the historian of scholarship writes—

‘ Piero Vettori, whose name is more familiar in the Latin form of Petrus Victorius (1499-1585), may be regarded as possibly the greatest Greek scholar of Italy, as certainly the foremost representative of

classical scholarship in that country during the sixteenth century, which, for Italy at least, may well be called the *saeculum Victorianum* ' <sup>1</sup>.

A Victorian age in Italy ! It is a novel title to bestow on the epoch of Leo, the pope, and Titian, the painter ; and, immense as were Vettori's labours in elucidating Cicero and Aristotle, we cannot renew the enthusiasm of a contemporary poet, who set him aloft on a ' hill of Virtue ' between the two writers whom he expounded.

Though the main stream of letters was fed by this flowing tributary of scholarship, essential to the development of modern style, yet Shakespeare's theatre stands to witness that the true aims of Renaissance culture were only indirectly served by the more indiscriminating Humanists. Take, for instance, the Humanists of drama, and contrast their academic precepts with the practice of the Elizabethan masters. These Italian critics and their successors unquestionably increased Shakespeare's range, though he knew little Latin and less Greek. But they did not clog his free utterance. He drew in with every breath the air which the critics had re-created, but he did not exhale it with every breath. They did not limit his freedom by the rules and prohibitions of their schools.

There were many such writers at this time. From first to last, we are told, say from 1527 to 1600, ' not more than three years on the average passed without the appearance of a critical treatise of some importance. Every now and then a short lull would occur ; but this was always made up by a greater crowd of writers after the interval ' <sup>2</sup>. Vettori, for instance, published an elaborate edition of Aristotle's

<sup>1</sup> Sir J. E. Sandys, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> G. Saintsbury, *History of Criticism*.



*Poetics*. Trissino, whose tragic *Sofonisba* we met at the close of the last chapter, wrote two Latin essays on the theory of drama. Giambattista Giraldi Cinthio (1504-73), whose tragic *Orbecche* was performed at Ferrara in 1541, wrote critical discourses in contribution to his craft. More valuable, perhaps, was his collection of tales, *Heccatomithi*, which Shakespeare explored for the sources of *Othello* and *Measure for Measure*. Francesco Robertelli wrote a new commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* (1548). Girolamo Fracastoro turned his studies in physics with Pomponazzi to a medico-didactic poem on a disease politely disguised as shepherd's sunstroke. Later, he wrote a Latin dialogue, *Naugerius*, 1555, in which the chief spokesman on poetry was the poet, Navagero, to whom we shall return. A *de Poeta* by Antonio Sebastiano Minturno appeared at Venice in 1559. Julius Cæsar Scaliger, the elder, so called in distinction to Joseph Justus, his son, wrote seven books on poetics, 1561; he was also prominent in the controversy aroused by Erasmus's *Ciceronianus*.

We need not pursue this enumeration. But what was the effect on poetic art of all this business in poetic criticism during Italy's 'Victorian age'? We may study it, first, in an *Ars Poetica*, written in Latin hexameters, and published, 1527, by

#### MARCO GIROLAMO VIDA (1480-1546).

Vida's treatise, Horatian in form and Virgilian in counsel, was rendered into English heroic verse by Christopher Pitt in 1725, and its author was hailed by Pope, subscribing to Boileau's judgment, as—

'Immortal Vida! on whose honour'd brow  
The poet's bays and critic's ivy grow:  
Cremona now shall ever boast thy name (Vida's birthplace)  
As next in place to Mantua, next in fame'. (Virgil's birth-  
place)

The comparison with Virgil is just, if merit is to be judged by intention ; for Vida's argument throughout his three books tended all to Virgil-worship. The injunction to borrow and steal, and to 'strip the Ancients' of their raiment, was recommended as the height of art. Experiment and eccentricity were deprecated—

'Let things submit to words on no pretence,  
But make your words subservient to your sense' ;

and, even if new words are used,

'Yet admit no words into the song,  
Unless they prove the stock from which they sprung. . . .  
But where you find your native tongue too poor,  
Transport the riches of the Grecian store'.

All the burden of Vida's verse was 'Follow Virgil', 'Follow Horace', 'Follow the Ancients'—

'Hence sacred Virgil from thy soul adore  
Above the rest, and to thy utmost power  
Pursue the glorious paths he struck before. . . .  
Come, then, ye youths, and urge your generous toils ;  
Come, strip the Ancients, and divide the spoils'.

In a later age of European poetry we shall return to the bearers of this burden.

Next, take the Italian treatise, *la Poetica d'Aristotele*, 1570, of

LUDOVICO CASTELVETRO (1505-71).

Castelvetro's excellent purpose, characteristic of Renaissance criticism, was to teach poets their art, 'following the thread whereof, it is not possible to go astray'. He held the sanguine belief that 'if the teaching of the art is good and complete, it will be able to teach what we ought to do in every part of poetry'. Thus, criticism, which is the art of poetry, will 'teach well and directly to compose poems'; and, conversely, poems composed without respect to such teaching will be irregular and, therefore, unpoetic. *Poetam creare instituimus*, we undertake to

create a poet, was the actual statement of the elder Scaliger ; and Castelvetro, if less pretentious, was no less conscious of his mission.

No part of the art of poetry (it is important to follow Castelvetro's argument for the sake of French drama in the *grand siècle*) is so prone to regulations and prohibitions as drama. For it differs from narrative poetry by its use of things as well as words. The representation of action by words admits all kinds of poetic licenses. The representation of action by words and things—words by words and things by things, as in drama—reduces such licenses to a minimum. ' *Piu simile modo sono le parole e cose* ' : the more similar method of representation is by words and things ; and, once this obligation of verisimilitude is imposed, the laws of drama are invented, and the art acquires the doubtful boon of a written constitution. Here, then, is the origin of what is known in the later history of drama as the Laws (three in one) of the Dramatic Unities. To preserve the likeness between things and things, between the things on the stage and the things in the auditorium, the scene of a play was to be confined within a space readily seizable by the imagination of the spectators : this was the Unity of Place ; the duration was to be limited approximately to the period required for its enactment : this was the Unity of Time ; and the action was to be worked out through regular stages to a definite conclusion : this was the Unity of Action. These laws were formally accepted in 1640 as binding on the French stage, and their function was stated by Boileau in the clearest possible terms—

Qu'en un lieu, qu'en un jour, un seul fait accompli  
Tienne jusqu'à la fin le théâtre rempli '.

Here we have but to observe how Horatians and Aristotelians in the sixteenth century handed on this

matter of criticism for formulation and practice in the seventeenth. And if particular appropriation be sought, we may add that the Unity of Time first took shape in Cinthio's treatise, and the Unity of Place in Castelvetro's, and that both were expanded from the Unity of Action, in Aristotle, *Poetics*, VII.

We turn from the reformers of modern letters, whose excessive submission to the Ancients made the freedom of learning a new tyranny (Cardinal Bembo, for example, Latin Secretary to Pope Leo X, was so ultra-rigid a Ciceronian as to write of a Christian Bishop, that he 'put his trust in the immortal gods'!) to four transcendent Humanists: a Dutchman, a Frenchman, and two Englishmen; Erasmus, Budé, Colet and More, who flamed in the forehead of the sixteenth century.

Eldest by a few months and greatest by centuries of praise was

#### DESIDERIUS ERASMUS (1466-1536).

The name Erasmus, borne by a bishop-hero, was never uncommon in the Netherlands, and Desiderius, its Latin equivalent, was assumed by the Dutch Humanist in later life. To these two names, both signifying 'Delectable', was added Roterodamus, in virtue of his birthplace at Rotterdam; and, more recently, 'Erasmus, the Delectable of Rotterdam', has been called 'the Educator of Europe'<sup>1</sup>. In an age when all Europe was at school, the epithet is superb and inalienable.

Thus, time has amply repaired the shameful birth and shadowed childhood of Erasmus. The story is best related in *ὁ βίος λάθρα*, 'The Secret Life', which was probably from Erasmus's own pen, and

<sup>1</sup> Foster Watson, in *The Nineteenth Century and After*. March, 1916.

which served Charles Reade in 1861 as the basis of his historical romance, *The Cloister and the Hearth*—

‘Mother was called Margaret, daughter of a physician named Peter. . . . Father was named Gerard; he had secret intercourse with Margaret in anticipation of marriage; some say that words of betrothal had passed between them. This affair gave great offence to the parents and brothers of Gerard. . . . There were ten brothers—no sister—by the same father and mother; all the brothers married. Gerard was the youngest but one. It was the general wish that, out of so great a number, one should be consecrated to God. You know the humours of old people. . . . Gerard finding himself quite debarred from marriage by the opposition of all, took a desperate course; he secretly left the country. . . . The woman he had hoped to make his wife was left with child. . . . Gerard betook himself to Rome. There he earned a sufficient livelihood by writing, printing not being then in use. . . . And he lived after the fashion of youth. . . . When his parents were informed that he was in Rome, they wrote to him that the young woman whom he had wished to marry was dead. He, taking this to be true, was so grieved that he became a priest and applied his whole mind to religion. When he returned home he found out the deception; but she never afterwards had any wish to marry’<sup>1</sup>.

‘He provided a liberal education for his boy’, adds the son of Gerard and Margaret. Erasmus was sent to school at Deventer and Bois-le-duc (Hertogenbosch), and was ordained in the Order of St. Augustine.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Epistles of Erasmus*. By Francis Morgan Nichols, preliminary chapter. I quote from the Translation of the Letters in this edition (1901-04).

In 1497 he went to Paris in the train of the Bishop of Cambrai, and two years afterwards he was in England in company with Lord Mountjoy. His scholar's repute had gone before him, and Oxford opened ready arms. Grocyn, Linaere, and Latimer were all eager in their welcome, and this visit saw the foundation of a friendship fertile for Humanism between Erasmus and Colet.

Two years' hard work in Paris and another two years at Louvain, which ranked as the Florence of Flanders, and which flourished in honour till 1914, brought Erasmus back again to England from 1505-06. His next journey was to Italy, where he spent some time in the chief cities, and assisted Manuzio, the printer, with his *Aldine Classics* in Venice. He was pressed to make his home in Italy; but, partly, he was always a sojourner, and, partly, his Northern temperament was never fully in sympathy with Italian Humanism. Erasmus was in London again in 1509, as the guest of Sir Thomas More at Bucklersbury, when he paid his host the magnificent tribute—

‘Thomae Mori ingenio quid unquam finxit natura  
vel mollius, vel dulcius, vel felicius? <sup>1</sup>’

Later, Erasmus moved to Cambridge and other centres, where he spent some busy and anxious years. ‘The Lutheran tragedy’, he tells us, ‘burdened him with intolerable odium, being torn in pieces by either party, while he tried to benefit both’. Finally, he settled at Basle, a hive of Humanistic industry, with a new university, founded in 1460, and there he quietly superintended the publication of his works by his friend, Johann Froben.

To the works we come in the next paragraph. Here let it be recorded that Erasmus's personal intercourse

<sup>1</sup> ‘Than the mind of Thomas More what hath nature ever fashioned either gentler, sweeter, or happier?’



was hardly less valuable to learning than the books which he wrote. Peace and sanity followed in his footsteps, despite the religious ferment and political turmoil of the day. Erasmus was always a looker-on, a little wayward and whimsical, never pleased except with the best, generous in appreciation where it was due, but often a trifle aloof; a man with personality, as Holbein's portraits show us; gifted with irony, whether observing the little things of life in his Letters, Colloquies, and Adages, or, as in his *Ciceronianus*, rebuking intemperate Latinists; beyond comparison the supreme type of the restless scholar of the Renaissance. He made bitter enemies, no doubt, but 'in replying', he assures us truly, 'he was always courteous'; and it was rather from the sides he would not take and for what he refused to say than for his open acts and utterances that he incurred contemporary hostility. Even in death his support has been disputed by irreconcilable partisans. But now, afar from the controversies and from the ills of the age which provoked them, Erasmus stands on his scholar's height, a supreme example in literature of erudition without pedantry, of irony without savagery, of Latinity without servility, and of Humanism without fault or foible.

Lastly, as to what Erasmus wrote. The 'Adages' (*Adagia*), 1500, the 'Praise of Folly' (*Encomium Moriae*), 1511, the 'Colloquies' (*Colloquia*), 1516, and the *Ciceronianus*, 1527, have already been referred to here. The first and third are fascinating specimens of new thought applied to old themes. No common thing was ever quite the same when Erasmus had treated it with his alchemy. No sham could elude his penetration, nor any encrusted superstition resist the tests which he applied. The 'Praise of Folly' and the pamphlet on Cicero achieved, as we saw, their special purposes. The latter evoked several angry

replies, which left Erasmus unruffled and in the right. Next, Colet's scholars like to remember that Erasmus wrote the first Latin syntax and the first handbook of Latin composition ever used in St. Paul's School (founded 1509). At Louvain Erasmus helped to organize the *Collegium trilingue* for Latin, Greek, and Hebrew studies. In 1528 he approved his classical quality by a treatise 'on the correct pronunciation of Latin and Greek'. Hitherto, the living Greeks had set the standard. Henceforward, the 'Erasmian' values of ancient Greek sounds replaced and reformed the current method. Nebrissensis at Salamanca, we may note, was working on the same lines in Spain. More extensive monographs on wider aspects of education were published by Erasmus during these years, and he issued editions of Church Fathers and of various Greek and Latin authors.

The essential Erasmus is in his Letters, collected in 1529 and again in 1536. There we see the modern scholar in the making, and thence, as from no other source, we derive moving pictures of the sixteenth century, which can best be described as cinematographic. Take his faith in Hellenism, for example, prophetic of Sir Henry Maine, Sir Richard Jebb, and S. H. Butcher in latter days—

'while I pass my time in the gardens of the Greek writers, I gather, as I go on, much that will also be of use in sacred studies. For this one thing I know by experience, that we cannot be anything in any kind of literature without Greek'<sup>1</sup>.

Take a delightful touch, which brings the dawn of the Renaissance almost visibly before our eyes—

'If you have not yet chanced to see Thomas More's *Utopia*, mind you get it, and read it at your

<sup>1</sup> To Colet, 1504-05.

earliest opportunity. You will not regret your pains'<sup>1</sup>.

Take, in a lighter vein, his jest at first meeting the Basle publisher with his pleasant and hospitable father-in-law—

‘I delivered to Johann Froben a letter from Erasmus, adding that he was my intimate friend, and had entrusted me with the business of publishing his lucubrations, so that whatever I did would stand good as done by Erasmus himself. I added at last, that I was so like him, that whoever saw me saw Erasmus. He then broke into a laugh, as he detected the hoax. His father-in-law paid our bill at the Inn, and transferred us with our horses and baggage to his own residence’<sup>2</sup>.

Two letters were contributed by Erasmus to the testimonials from ‘Illustrious Men’, which Reuchlin procured in his own behalf, and which gave occasion for the Erfurt satire against the monks of Cologne, described in Chapter III above. Thus, ‘he incurred’, we read in his *Secret Life*, ‘the bitter jealousy of barbarians and monks’. For there were barbarians before the nineteenth century, when Matthew Arnold rediscovered them in England; and our last extract from the Letters of Erasmus deals with an English Philistine, of a type never altogether extinct, despite the Board of Education and the Teachers’ Registration Council. Shortly after the foundation of St. Paul’s School Erasmus wrote to Dean Colet—

‘A thing comes into my head, which I know will amuse you. When, being with some Masters, I introduced the subject of your under-teacher, one of them, a person of some reputation, smiled and

<sup>1</sup> To Guillaume Budé, 1516.

<sup>2</sup> To Wimpheling, 1514.

said, "Who would submit to pass his life in that school among boys, who could live in any position whatever elsewhere?" I answered softly, that I thought it a highly honourable office to bring up youth in virtue and learning; that Christ had not despised that age, upon which kindness was best bestowed, and from which the richest harvest might be expected, as indeed, it was the seed-plot and planting-ground of the common wealth. I added, that any really pious person would be of opinion that there was no duty by which he could serve God better than by drawing children to Christ. He made a face, and said sneeringly, "If anyone is so much set on serving Christ, he had better go into a monastery". I replied, that Paul places true religion in offices of charity, and that charity consists in doing all the good we can to our neighbours. "Behold", said he, "we have left all—in that lies perfection". "Nay," said I, "he has not left all who, when he might benefit many by his labour, leaves a duty which he thinks too lowly". And with that, for fear of a quarrel, I took leave of him'.

Note, here, as characteristic of Erasmus, the 'soft answer' and the 'fear of a quarrel', which yet did not prevent him from piercing the Philistine hide with arrows of Humanism and Reform. Note, too, how the spirit of the Renaissance, compounded from the best qualities of both these forces, breathes in the noble defence of the 'seed-plot and planting-ground' of education.

We have left to the last the most ambitious of the works 'attempted' by Erasmus (the modest epithet is his own) in his lifelong crusade against *inscitia*, which is at once wilful ignorance and want of knowledge. The destructive weapons in this crusade were

the 'Praise of Folly' and the 'Adages', and Erasmus's gentle-ironic tongue. Its constructive weapon he called the *Novum Instrumentum*, a new implement of learning, and it took shape as a critical edition of the Greek text of the New Testament, with a Latin version in a parallel column. This notable work was published in 1516 by Johann Froben at Basle; and, apart from its scholarly value, which it is outside our province to discuss, the moral effect of its production was immediate and enduring. As a literary shock it has been compared<sup>1</sup> with the astronomical discoveries of the seventeenth century. True, at Alcala, in Spain, a Polyglot Bible was in preparation, under the supervision of Cardinal Ximenez, which was to see the light in 1522. Vernacular Bibles, as we shall see, were issued from about 1520 onwards. But, though these movements were in the air, Erasmus's departure in method directed a challenge at tradition which could not fail to hit its mark. He treated the New Testament like a Greek classic, bringing to it the impartiality of a scholar and the reverent emotion of a Christian. Biblical criticism, as a science of theologians, started with Erasmus; its tercentenary was celebrated in 1916.

It was the tone of the work which told. Textual criticism was good, Biblical exegesis was good, correct translation was good, and all was more or less new in the early years of the sixteenth century. But better than all these good gifts which Erasmus brought to the study of the Bible, and improved notably in the bringing, was the large and genial utterance of the gentleman-scholar of the Renaissance, his respect for the Book and for its readers, which was as remote from the childishness of Hans Sachs as from the pugnacity of Martin Luther. Take, as a signal example, Erasmus's 'Invitation' to the New

<sup>1</sup> By Mark Pattison.

Testament, his *Paraclesis* to the *Novum Instrumentum*. This noble summons to conduct is filled with a passion for righteousness, and it has been well said to mark the crossing of a Rubicon in literature, with the Middle Ages on one side, and the modern world on the other <sup>1</sup>.

‘The mysteries of kings’, Erasmus wrote, ‘it may be safer to conceal’ (though Machiavelli was just drawing back the veil). ‘But Christ desired his mysteries to be published as openly as possible. I wish that even the weakest woman should read the Gospel, should read the Epistles of St. Paul. . . . I long that the husbandman should sing portions of them to himself as he follows the plough, that the weaver should hum them to the tune of his shuttle, that the traveller should beguile with their stories the tedium of his journey’.

A more exact scholar than Erasmus, though far inferior to him in influence, was the great French *savant*,

#### GUILLAUME BUDÉ (1467-1540),

commonly known as Budæus. He had been secretary to King Louis XII, and it fell to his lot to attend King Francis I at the Field of the Cloth of Gold; but Budé’s true home was in his library, whether in Paris or at his country-house, and there his wife was careful to guard his industrious leisure.

Budé and Erasmus divided, or, more correctly, they shared the throne of Humanism in Europe, Budé as the leading Hellenist, Erasmus the leading Latinist, of the day. They impressed contemporaries as much by the rare serenity of their relations as by the weight

<sup>1</sup> Foster Watson, in *The Nineteenth Century and After*. March, 1916.



of their combined attainments. Both alike used the Latin tongue (an eminent professor of recent times was haunted by the nightmare of Erasmus writing in Dutch), for they addressed the same literary republic, where national distinctions disappeared. But Budé's preference for a fixed home entitles him to Calvin's eulogy as, definitively, a scholar of France—

‘ The foremost ornament and monument of letters, by whose greatness France has vindicated the palm of learning ’.

Budé's works need not detain us. The most general in interest was his French treatise, *de l'Institution du Prince*, a common topic in those distracted times, on which Erasmus had written in Latin and Machiavelli in Italian. His ‘ Transition of Hellenism to Christianity ’ was a Latin defence of Greek philosophy from the imputation of heresy, which, though valuable and learned, is of course superseded to-day. His treatise on coinage (*de Asse*) and his edition of Justinian's *Pandecta* broke new ground in their own departments, and he conferred an immense boon on French Humanism by advising King Francis I to found Royal Readerships in Paris (Greek, Hebrew, and Mathematics), out of which grew the Collège de France. Two original Royal Readers were Pierre Danès and Jacques Toussain; among their pupils were Calvin and Loyola, and, possibly, Rabelais. Another Reader was Mathurin Cordier, who wrote useful ‘ Colloquies ’ on education; and a yet more eminent recruit to the Corporation in 1551 was Pierre de la Ramée, known by the scholar's name of Ramus. De la Ramée's high courage and vast learning, unique even in that epoch, shine more brightly out of the tragedy of his fate, which illustrated the perils of scholarship and the sacrifices entailed on its

votaries. He was done to death in the Massacre of St. Bartholomew on August 26, 1572, and his murder profoundly affected Humanistic thought in all countries. Sidney meditated it in England, Marlowe put the horror on the stage, and Francis Bacon and the University of Cambridge studied the martyr-scholar's works.

Erasmus, as we have seen, prepared the *Novum Instrumentum*. Sir Thomas More, as we shall see, wrote *Utopia*; and, remarkable though it is

‘ that two such works, written by two such men, should, in measure, be traceable to the influence and express the views of a more obscure but greater man than they, yet, in truth, much of the merit of both these works belongs indirectly to Colet ’<sup>1</sup>.

#### JOHN COLET (1467-1519),

whose influence and views were thus so effective in his generation, was a pupil of Grocyn and Linacre, the first English missionaries of culture, and visited Italy in 1494. It was the year of Mirandola's death and of Savonarola's brief ascendancy; and these events, and perhaps his own experience as the sole survivor in a family of twenty-two, turned his thoughts more exclusively to holy things. He became Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, lecturer at Oxford on the Epistles of St. Paul, and in 1509, as we saw, Colet founded St. Paul's School. His friendship with More and Erasmus is an episode of Renaissance history to which it is pleasant to recur: the three were united in a little group of like-minded workers and thinkers, generous in zeal, faithful in utterance, and beneficent in act.

<sup>1</sup> Seebohm *Oxford Reformers*.

Erasmus and Colet died peacefully. The violent fate of

SIR THOMAS MORE (1478-1535)

reminds us, as poignantly as de la Ramée's, of the evils of the times. Like Colet, he was taught by Groeyn and Linacre. Like Budé, he attended his Sovereign at the Field of the Cloth of Gold; but, unlike Budé, he did not retire to the safe seclusion of his library. He enjoyed King Henry VIII's favour, with a very shrewd perception of the countervailing obligations which it imposed. He was knighted in 1521, became Speaker of the House of Commons, and Lord Chancellor of England, in succession to Wolsey. Like Wolsey, too, he fell. His resignation in 1532 was followed not long after by his committal to the Tower, in connection with the oath of allegiance after the king's divorce and remarriage. A sentence of hanging was commuted, and More was beheaded, July 6, 1535. The old stories are well known: his worldly wife, his favourite daughter, Margaret, his care of his beard on the block 'as that had never committed treason', and all the wisdom and the whimsy of a man at once pious and learned, merry and sad, wide-hearted, open-handed, and steadfast-souled.

Neither the woolsack nor the scaffold was indicated in More's contributions to the cause of Humanism in letters. He translated St. Augustine's *Civitas Dei* and the Italian life of Pico della Mirandola. In 1515, on an embassy to Flanders in connection with a commercial treaty, the idea of *Utopia* occurred to him. He was standing, he tells us, on the crowded quay at Antwerp, then, as always, bright with foreign shipping and busy in its many wharves, when he chanced to espy

'a certayne Straunger, a man well stricken in age, with a blacke sonne-burned face, a longe bearde, and

a cloke cast homely about his shoulders, whom by his favour and apparell forthwith I judged to bee a mariner '.

The judgment proved correct.

'There is no man thys day livyng ', More was informed, 'that can tell you of so many straunge and unknowen peoples and countreyes, as this man can '.

The stranger's name was Raphael Hythloday—

'His patrimonye that he was borne unto, he lefte to his brethren (for he is a Portugall borne), and, for the desire that he had to see and knowe the farre Countreyes of the worlde, he joyned himselfe in companye with Amerike Vespuce and in the iii last voyages of those iiii that be nowe in printe and abrode in every mannes handes, he continued styll in his company, savyng that in the last voyage he came not home agayne with him. For he made such meanes and shift, what by intretaunce and what by importune sute, that he gotte licence of mayster Amerike (though it were sore against his wyll) to be one of the xxiiii whiche in the ende of the last voyage were left in the country of Gulike. He was therefore lefte behynde for his myndes sake, as one that tooke more thoughte and care for travailynge than dyenge: having customably in his mouthe these saynges—He that hath no grave, is covered with the skye; and, the way to heaven out of all places is of like length and distaunce '.

This is the novelty of More's *Utopia*, and its point of contact with the realistic fiction of future times. Other writers, from Plato downwards, had founded ideal republics in other regions of *Outopia*, which means, literally, no-place. More first founded a

Utopia on real records of ocean-traffic. He wrote of visible, not merely visionary, things. It went home, this reference to Amerigo, who had given his name to America. *Sapit mare*, it tastes of the sea, this picture of the Antwerp mariner, who had stayed behind for his mind's sake, and had had more care for travelling than for dying, and had measured the road to heaven from lonely graves beneath the stars. Such touches of present actuality blew a breath from the salt West road through the Latin leaves of the Humanist's *Utopia*, and caused the reforms it recommended to seem, if not near, yet real.

How did they appear to More himself? Book I of *Utopia* discussed social wrongs, Book II sketched model institutions; and More has been criticized as Lord Chancellor for not moulding the English code on the Utopian. He drafted laws for the elect spirits of the Renaissance in the Latin language of intellectual communion, but he administered laws as he found them in Tudor England, and affected as judge no Humanist's tolerance. We must leave this problem where we find it. A writer's personal opinions are not necessarily or precisely the same as those which he expresses in the guise of fiction; and the author of *Utopia*, it is to be observed, was not an Englishman, as such, but a Latinist—a citizen of the Republic without frontiers in which Erasmus was president. Nor did England father it or foster it. It was first imprinted at Louvain, and its second home was in Paris, where Budé supplied the introduction which ushered it into the world of Humanism. Its first translation was into French, 1550, in conformity with France's constant mission as 'agent-general for European culture' <sup>1</sup>. The English version by Ralph Robinson, from which we quote in this chapter, followed in 1551, and Italy, Spain, and

<sup>1</sup> Sir S. Lee, *French Renaissance in England*.

Germany were next provided with native renderings. A Frenchman, again, François Rabelais, first treated *Utopia* as a classic, thus investing Sir Thomas More with 'the proud title of the only Englishman who made in his day a substantial contribution to the broad stream of European thought' <sup>1</sup>.

Accordingly, we need not hesitate to evade the question of More's consistency. It does not touch the charm of his book that the Latin Humanist was England's Lord High Chancellor. Moreover, More said himself that he could not 'agree and consent to all things' stated by Hythloday,

'so must I nedes confesse and graunt that many thinges be in the Utopian weale publique, whiche in our cities I may rather wishe for than hope after'.

And perhaps the Lord Chancellor was among those who share Dr. Johnson's opinion—

'How small of all that human hearts endure,  
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure'.

Certainly, he wrote in *Utopia*, II—

'They have but fewe lawes. For to people so instructe and institute very fewe do suffice. . . . Furthermore, they utterlie exclude and banishe all attorneis, proctours, and serjeauntes at the lawe: whiche craftelye handell matters, and subtelly dispute of the lawes. For they thinke it moste meete, that every man should pleade his own matter, and tel the same tale before the judge that he would tel to his man of lawe. So shall there be lesse circumstaunce of wordes, and the trueth shal soner come to light'.

<sup>1</sup> Sir S. Lee, *ibid.*



We are still Utopians in this respect.

From the broad stream of European thought we may turn back for a moment to some of the tributaries which fed it. The troop of scholars is amazing and unending. Giovanni de Medici was a scholar, who reigned from 1513 as

#### POPE LEO X,

and maintained scholars at his Court. A son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, he was born with a taste for rule, and his pontificate, unrivalled in splendour, is known as the Golden Age. To a closer scrutiny, it reveals an alloy of metals. Leo's lavish generosity to favourites and sycophants was, partly at least, responsible for his everlasting want of money; and want of money, we shall find, had a direct bearing on the causes of the Reformation. Even as degraded a creature as Pietro Aretino (1492-1556), who, like a gadfly of the Renaissance, stung his impudent way to ladies' boudoirs and princes' cabinets, was admitted as a *virtuoso* to the Pope's intimacy. Leo was always more susceptible to ideas which served his own aggrandizement than to the graver forces which were making for reform. We shall see what Luther thought of Rome when he visited it early in Leo's reign. Here we have only to note how the most powerful figure in the Renaissance, at the head of his pleasure-loving Court, encouraged by patronage and example a type of culture indifferent to moral aims.

Another scholar was the

#### EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN I,

who reigned from 1493 to 1519. Like the Pope, he was a patron of art and letters, and special recognition is due to his personal interest in wood-engraving, as

practised by the German painter, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528). It is an art so closely allied to literature, especially in connection with the popular emblem-books of the time, as to claim recognition in this context; higher recognition, indeed, than Maximilian's own epic of chivalry. *Teuerdank*, 1517, which long enjoyed an esteem far above its modest pretensions.

Nearer the central fire of Dean Colet and Sir Thomas More was their eminent Spanish contemporary,

#### JUAN LUIS DE VIVES (1492-1540).

Like Erasmus, Vives was a wanderer who was equally welcome and at home in Paris, Louvain, and Oxford, where, at Wolsey's invitation, he lectured on the humanities. As tutor to Princess Mary Tudor, future wife of King Philip II of Spain, Vives dedicated to her his Latin treatise on 'The Education of a Christian Woman', which enters literature by another gate. This essay contained the adverse judgment passed by Vives on the character of Celestina, in the Spanish comedy of *Calisto and Melibea*; and it was through More's friendship with Vives that Rastell, who was More's brother-in-law, was inspired to add a 'moral' ending to his English version of this unmoral play (see page 200). Like More, Vives fell out of favour with King Henry VIII on the matter of the Royal divorce, and his later works were written on the Continent. They included a *de Disciplinæ*, 1531, exalting the status of the teacher (Erasmus's letter to Colet will be remembered), and a *de Animæ Vita*, 1538, which helped to formulate a philosophy of the emotions.

Education, again, was the topic, as urgent as it was

common in those days, of *The Boke called the Governour*, 1531, by

SIR THOMAS ELYOT,

an English Humanist and diplomatist. Elyot belonged to the reformed Church, and he sought conscientiously to combine the best elements in Renaissance culture with the more unbending moral principles of Northern practice. His *Governour*, his *Latin-English Dictionary*, and some of his school-books were in vogue for many years. It will interest schoolboys to observe that Elyot ruled out football from the curriculum of sports as 'nothing but a beastly fury and external violence'.

Law, too, had its students and exponents. Ulrich Zasius, a German, and Andrea Alciati, an Italian, showed the way to a Frenchman,

JACQUES CUIJAS (1522-60),

who ranks in his own sphere of jurisprudence as a secular scholar as distinguished as Erasmus.

But a list which degenerates into a catalogue has no historical value; and space, not merit, must rule out the eminent names of Melancthon and Camerarius, Latinized from Schwartzerd and Kammermeister; the Basle Humanist, Beatus Rhenanus, who wrote the first life of Erasmus; Cardinal Jacopo Sadoletto, author of treatises on teaching and on the choice of books; and Andrea Navagero (1483-1529), who lent his name to Fracastoro's *Naugerius*, and whom we shall meet later on in connection with Boscan in Spain.

Finally, among these Humanists who revolved round the star of Erasmus, and, like him, used the Latin speech, very grateful acknowledgment is due to a crowd of middlemen of culture. The Aldine Press

of Manuzio at Venice and the printing-press set up at Westminster by

WILLIAM CAXTON (1422-91)

in 1476 have already been mentioned. Caxton's services to English literature were considerable. He put nearly a hundred volumes into print and was himself responsible for the translation of many of them. Similar services to France were rendered by

GEOFFROI TORY (1480-1533),

printer-royal to King Francis I. Tory's *Champ-Fleury*, 1529, was a particularly sumptuous volume of contemporary arts and crafts.

Translation from country to country became a faculty of letters in this age. It helped literature in two ways. First, it circulated the best books, and, next, it set standards for emulation. England particularly benefited by this community of goods; for, while More was still writing in scholars' Latin, translators such as John Bouchier, Lord Berners (1467-1533), were rendering into good Tudor English Froissart's *Chronicles* and other modern works.

So Europe went to school under the Humanists, and acquired through her greater Latin masters the treasures of classical lore and the secrets of classical style. But before she scaled the topmost peaks of the Renaissance, and applied the New Learning in a new way, she had still to convert to her own use the lessons taught by

## II. THE REFORMERS,

to whose special activity we now come.

It is written in the *Cambridge Modern History*, on the high authority of Sir Richard Jebb, that 'the German Renaissance is the Reformation'. While we

accept this statement without cavil, we note, for more exact apprehension, that the Reformation was of mixed descent. On one side it traced its origin from the Humanists of Italy; on the other, from the mystics of its own country.

The primary, vital fact for literature is that the Reformers set the Bible open. Lorenzo Valla had criticized Church archives; Pico della Mirandola had seen visions of Moses and Plato composing their differences with St. Paul; and, thus fathered, the Humanists of the North, returning hot-foot from Italy, had applied the New Learning to the Bible. Johann Reuchlin studied 'God's language', the Hebrew of the Old Testament. Erasmus prepared to render both Testaments into Humanistic Latin. Poets and painters, homely or stately, illustrated biblical themes. But still the Bible was not an open book. Still the Latin language of the Vulgate was the common medium of communion and prayer. Still men spoke to God in a strange tongue, remote from familiar usage, and from the sweet, common, household ways of women's love and children's faith. Still something was wanting to complete the half-finished task of the Northern Humanists, and to realize in very fact the aspiration uttered by Erasmus in the *Paraclesis* to his *Novum Instrumentum* that the husbandman should sing it to his plough, and the weaver hum it to the tune of his shuttle.

This complement was found on German soil. The passing of biblical criticism, of the scholars' interest in the Bible, into the German Renaissance of the Reformation—the ascent from Lorenzo Valla to Martin Luther—was assisted by larger forces than grammarians or commentators could fashion. Such forces were social, temperamental, even, more closely, climatic; and if the father of the Reformation was Italian Humanism, its mother was German

Mysticism. 'Germany has been the native soil of mysticism in Europe'<sup>1</sup>; and we go back to the early springs of mysticism for the cause of that sudden, leaping joy with which the Protestant movement was greeted in the North. Disciples of Thomas à Kempis and of kindred 'reformers before the Reformation' made it their main endeavour,

'since they could not acquiesce in the scholastic exactitudes of theologians, to clarify the relationship of men to God, and to reconcile the contradictions between the inner and the outer life'<sup>2</sup>.

It was a brave endeavour in any age. Especially, we read elsewhere,

'in an age when Scholasticism was submitting religion to cold and exact logic, it was like turning from some dusty road into a quiet grass-grown lane, to hear of devout contemplation leading up to perfect holiness and spiritual knowledge'<sup>3</sup>.

To the hearts of the children of these enthusiasts (the literal meaning of *ἐνθεος* is intended), the mystic yearning was fulfilled by a franchise of intimacy with God. A schooling of the heart and a logic of the emotions, is Goethe's definition of mysticism; and this it was which sent Huguenot and Protestant with psalms on their lips to the stake; which gilded the Wars of Religion with the radiance of belief; which made worth while the burnings and the rapine; and which even illumined the Thirty Years' War, paralysing as it proved to German culture, with the hope of them that wait for morning.

It would not be appropriate in this place to discuss

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *op. cit.*; and see page 83 above.

<sup>2</sup> Biese, *Deutsche Litteraturgeschichte*, i.

<sup>3</sup> Vaughan, *Hours with the Mystics*.



the changes in German psychology since the beginning of the sixteenth century. It was the fate of the religious differences to be merged in territorial struggles, which overran alike the 'dusty roads' and the 'grass-grown lanes'. The old landmarks were removed and the mystical origins forgotten in the clauses of the religious-dynastic Treaties: Augsburg, 1555, which invented the ominous principle of creeds regulated by frontiers (*cujus regio, ejus religio*), and Westphalia, 1648, which closed the Thirty Years' War by a rearrangement of the map rather than by a permanent charter of toleration.

To the effects of the Reformation we shall return. We shall see how the ravages of warfare reacted on popular taste <sup>1</sup>, and how kings and courtiers were too busy with war and repairs after war to found in their depopulated districts Renaissance centres of light and learning.

Meanwhile, German Humanists and Mystics combined to produce

#### MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546),

the hero of the Protestant Reformation. It is difficult to imagine to-day how vast a change he introduced by his German translation of the Bible. It was more than the primary question, though that, too, was bitterly disputed, of King's English (or Kaiser's German) *versus* Pope's Latin. Luther's Bible was a protest against monopoly; against a monopoly founded most securely on well-nigh immemorial tradition, and hedged in by the awful authority of the Church. It asserted human against 'divine' right, the right of the mother against the

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Herford, *Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century*, wrote in 1886: 'If the extraordinarily gifted yet relatively barbarous Germany of the sixteenth century was, in pure literature, of any moment for its neighbours, it was chiefly in so far as it made literary capital of its barbarism',

priest, so that the road of the German reformers was marked by the ruin of sanctities and the swift gathering of elemental passions.

It was near the beginning of that road that Luther turned the Latin Bible into a German *Volksbuch*. To write 'dear Mary' instead of 'all-gracious Mary', was not merely to render the words freshly but to endue them with a new soul and a direct, popular appeal. And particularly, be it remarked, with a German soul—

'Wer deutsch kan', wrote Luther, about this very word *dear*, 'der weis wol, welch ein herzlich fein Wort das ist'.

'Only a German can know what a genuinely heartsome word it is'; and he proceeded to write down in order, for the sensuous pleasure of rehearsing them—

die liebe Maria	der liebe Fürst ( <i>prince</i> )
der liebe Gott	der liebe Mann
der liebe Kaiser	das liebe Kind ( <i>child</i> ).

Let this collocation stand for many. To call God 'dear' in homely Saxon, instead of using the Latin equivalent for the Hebrew grandiose epithet, was to shorten and simplify the approach from the humblest hearth to the throne of Omnipotence. It was to bring the fruits of Humanism to the Mystics, and to add spiritual to intellectual liberty.

'Eleutherios', or the Deliverer, as Luther once appropriately subscribed himself, was born and bred among the peasantry at Eisleben in Saxony. He was still a monk at Wittenberg, enjoying some repute as a lecturer, when he paid his one and only visit to Rome. It was an experience which men in his position—a provincial monk visiting the Holy See—would interpret according to their moods. Luther's mood was critical and pitiful. He looked in vain for

honourable poverty, for care of the absent poor, for signs of idealism and self-sacrifice and of the homely virtues exalted by Hans Sachs. With the thrifty, moral shrewdness of his class he pierced through the æsthetic coverings to the corruption and luxury of the Papal Court, and his monk's eyes measured the gulf between profession and performance. He saw money poured like water on fine buildings and objects of art ; he saw the architects and painters, the poets and *virtuosi*, in the ante-rooms ; he marked favourites as depraved as Aretino, with no thought save of their own advancement ; and all the while—

‘ the hungry sheep look up, and are not fed ’ ;

and, seeing this, Luther went back to Wittenberg with certain impressions graven on a retentive memory.

He remembered them seven years afterwards, when Johann Tetzel, a Dominican monk, came touring through Saxony with a Papal Bull for the sale of Indulgences. The trade was lucrative and merry, and it occurred in the ordinary course of business ; but a Catholic historian admits that Tetzel, the vendor of the Indulgences, ‘ did not exactly shine as a pattern of virtue ’, and that he ‘ employed phrases of a repulsive character to extol the power of the Indulgence which he was preaching ’<sup>1</sup>. It was all repulsive to Martin Luther : the agent, the Indulgence, and its object, which was to collect the pence of Saxon peasants in order that Pope Leo X might rebuild St. Peter's at Rome after Michelangelo's design. So he made his historic protest, and affixed the ninety-five theses, in which his views were embodied, on the door of his church at Wittenberg.

Of the Diet of the Empire at Worms on April 18, 1521, when Luther, the contumacious monk, defied

<sup>1</sup> H. Grisar, *Luther*, i. Engl. transl.

the Catholic Powers, we need not rehearse the famous story :

‘ Hier stehe ich. Ich kann nicht anders. Gott helfe mir ! Amen ’.

History, so richly stored with noble words, even in unromantic days, has few to equal, and none to surpass, the splendour of Luther’s saying : ‘ Here I stand. I cannot otherwise. God help me ! Amen ’<sup>1</sup>. The august president of the Diet was the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, grandson of the knightly Maximilian, and grandson, too, of King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile, whom he had succeeded in 1516 as King of Spain, the Netherlands, Naples, Sicily, and the New World. He abdicated in 1556, and was succeeded in Spain by his son Philip II, Queen Mary of England’s husband, and in the Empire by his brother, Ferdinand I. With the bitter fighting that ensued we shall not be much concerned, nor need we pause at Napoleon’s reflection that Charles V would have been better advised to espouse Martin Luther’s cause at Worms and thus to found in the sixteenth century a united Germany. The themes of historical might-have-beens are too vast for common speculation. Here we are chiefly concerned with Luther and the Reformation. It was not in Charles’s blood to parley with reform. He burned it out of his own country with the pitiless fires of the Inquisition which had been established in his grandparents’ reign ; and even after his abdication he bound his son, not unwilling, to the old course. To the Spanish aspect of this policy we shall return later on. Meanwhile, it was characteristic of the times that the autocrat of Catholic Spain should be competent

<sup>1</sup> The latest echo of these historic words was at Washington, April 2, 1917, when President Wilson signified the entry of the New World of America into the war against the Central Empires of Europe : ‘ for the principles that gave her birth . . . God helping her, she can no other ’. Luther was quoted against Germany.

to impose his will on the rising Protestantism of the North. *Cujus regio, ejus religio* ; and King Charles, as Holy Roman Emperor, pronounced the ban of the Empire on Martin Luther at Worms.

The outlaw took refuge at Wartburg under the wing of the Elector of Saxony. A few of the knights of German Humanism rallied to the Protestant standard. Ulrich von Hutten (died 1523), who had helped to write the 'Letters of Obscure Men' in the days of the Reuchlin controversy ; Franz von Sickingen (1481-1523), the soldier ; and Philipp Schwartzerd (Melanchthon, 1497-1560), the scholar, are memorable in this connection. But, mostly, Luther was alone, and he lived in hiding for a while, till the events of the Peasants' Revolt and other consequences of reform had relieved the worst terrors of Rome. When he returned at last to Wittenberg, he brought with him the fruits of his leisure in the form of the German Bible (New Testament, 1522 ; Old Testament, 1532 ; complete Bible, 1534). By this means he sought to slay the giant. By this means men poor as himself should confound and scatter the ignorance which was the strongest ally of his foes. He armed the hearts of his fellow-countrymen. The German Bible, throned in German hearts, neither Pope nor Emperor could overthrow. Not that Luther left all the argument to his opponents. Unfrocked, and married, and busy, he engaged in polemical writings, couched in vigorous Latin, on 'The Liberty of a Christian Man', 'The Babylonish Captivity of the Church', 'The Christian Nobility of the German Nation', together with letters, table-talk (*Tischreden*, 1566), and sermons. But dead controversies bury their pamphlets, and Luther's fame, founded on a rock, rests on his translation of the Bible. He bequeathed the forms of a single language, modelled on the speech of the Saxon Chancery of his own day, which is the New High

German of modern times, and which absorbed the rival dialects of *platt* and *hoch*, or Low and High German. So the Lutheran Bible became a household word. Its phrases were current in every mouth, its music rang in every ear, and it rendered accessible to all comers the conclusions of Hebrew and Greek scholarship.

To this *Volksbuch* Luther added *Volkslieder*; to the German Bible he added Bible-ballads. For Luther's hymns were a part of the Reformation, and ranked as propaganda as well as prayer—

‘ Ein’ feste Burg ist unser Gott,  
Ein’ gute Wehr and Waffen ’ . . .

‘ Erhalt’ uns, Gott, bei deinem Wort ’ . . .

These tunes, and tunes like these, placed a weapon at the disposal of reform which brought the toiler in the fields direct to the forecourts of Deity, without regard to the elaborate machinery of the ritual of the Roman Church.

There were other Bibles in northern countries. An early Danish reformer, Hans Tausen (1494-1561), showed the way to Christian Pedersen and Peter Palladius, who collaborated in producing ‘King Christian III’s Bible’ at Copenhagen, 1550. The corresponding translation in Sweden was effected in 1540-41 by Lars Peterrsen (Laurentius Petri), sometime Archbishop of Upsala. Olaf, brother to Lars, wielded a fiery pen at Stockholm. An earlier Swedish version of the New Testament had been issued in 1526 by Lars Anderssen (Laurentius Andreæ). In England, William Tyndale (c. 1484-1536), and Miles Coverdale (1488-1568); in France, Jaques Lefèvre d’Etaples (Faber Stapulensis, 1455-1537), who found publishers in Antwerp and Zürich, must always be mentioned with honour; and, briefly, this quarter-century of Teuton leadership laid deep the



spiritual foundations of life and thought in modern Europe.

More enduring fame in letters belongs to the life and writings of the French reformer, Jean Chauvin, or Cauvin, known commonly as

CALVIN (1509-64).

A native of Noyon, in Picardy, Calvin found it convenient, 1534, to leave France for Basle, where reformers did mostly gather. He paid a visit to Ferrara, and was received with favour at the d'Este Court, and settled finally in Geneva, thereafter associated with his memory. He established in the Swiss capital a kind of one-man theological patriarchate, never as mild or as enlightened as Savonarola's might have been, if Medicean Florence had been peopled with Mirandolas, but more of the dour and sombre kind which was to furnish patterns to Scottish Elders. It is the manner of his writing, however, not the subject-matter of his books, nor his religious rule at Geneva, which attracts students of literature to Calvin. His great work was an *Institution Chrétienne*, and its doctrine of original sin and outspoken anti-Roman tone, whatever their present significance to the comparative history of religion, are absorbed for the purposes of literature by the technical qualities of its style. Calvin wrote his book first in Latin, 1535, then in French, 1541; and the unique experience of acting as his own translator helped him to mould French prose to the logical precision and the constructive craft with which he had originally expressed himself in Latin. There was nothing of the rhetoricians' aureation, so common in an earlier generation, no rococo Latinistic gilding, in Calvin's carefully-chosen words, modulated sentences, and well-built paragraphs. With the sure, deft

workmanship of a master, he manipulated the formless material of the rich French vocabulary, and gave it gravity and composition. Perhaps he failed to give it life. The intense vitality of Rabelais, to whom we come in the next chapter, was still wanted to force modern French to serve the requirements of modern life. But the record of Calvin, the reformer, is at least as important to French prose as it was to the Protestant creed. He belongs to the Renaissance of French literature as much as to the German-Swiss Reformation. The difference between Calvin and Froissart is as the gulf between maturity and childhood; and in his hands, Cicero's style, so devoutly worshipped, so sedulously imitated, was used at last, as it should be, to guide rather than to instruct a Romance-language of Latin birth.

A French version of the Bible by Pierre Robert Olivetan was published at Neuchatel in 1535. It had the advantage of a preface by Calvin, and it helped partly to inspire the labours of Tyndale and Coverdale.

The record of Theodore de Bèze, commonly known as

#### BEZA (1519-1605),

carries us beyond the limits of the present chapter. He belongs to the story, however, by his succession to Calvin at Geneva, where his house, during forty pious years, was a house of call for sojourners and travellers. He wrote a French 'History of the Reform Churches', 1580, and 'Christian Meditations on Eight Psalms'; the latter, dedicated to Lord Bacon's mother, were issued in English, 1582. He was a contributor to the Geneva Psalter, which was published in 1551, and a Latin epigram on the defeat of the Armada, which Beza had the honour of writing for Queen Elizabeth, ran like wildfire through Protestant Europe.

Thus we complete our survey of Europe at school under the late Humanists and the Reformers. They did their work, and went their way. How they suffered in the doing and the going is written in the annals of the martyrs. What they achieved was to enlarge the mind of Europe, and to re-form its medieval conceptions by the wisdom and philosophy of the Ancients and the ardour of the Hebrew prophets. That enlargement by intercourse with the sages of dead, revived civilizations brought with it an outlook on current problems, a power of independent judgment, and a sense of individual well-being, the development of which we still have to trace. The worst darkness lay behind. War, persecution, hate, and many forms of ignorance and superstition, these were to rear their heads again, despite the amenities of art and the liberties of creed and learning. But the teachers had not lived in vain. From certain conclusions there could be no return. Never again could Europe slip back into the ring-fenced, sheltered days before Petrarch, Columbus, More, Erasmus, Luther, Calvin. For the New World had been opened to ships, the New Learning was open to knowledge, the New Church was open to belief.

Were they good or bad, the results of this secularization of Europe? It is still too early to decide. We shall see that the modern mind, imposed (or grafted) on the medieval by the poets and statesmen of this epoch, lacked stability and finality. The steps men took out of the Middle Ages, with whatever devotion and pains, were not last steps but first steps. In the sphere of literature, at any rate, there came a time of reaction to the Middle Ages, of an artistic revolt against positivism, which will occupy our attention later on. Without anticipating now that phase of romantic idealism, we may set down in succession [and in contrast two extracts from

competent critics, each of whom filled in his own time the post of Professor of Poetry at Oxford. They will help to point the difference, if not to decide the issue. The first, dated 1778, is from Warton's *History of English Poetry*—

‘Ignorance and superstition’, he declared, ‘so opposite to the real interests of human society, are the parents of imagination. The very devotion of the Gothic times was romantic. . . . We have lost a set of manners and a system of machinery more suitable to the purposes of Poetry than those which have been adopted in their place. We have parted with extravagancies that are above propriety, with incredibilities that are more acceptable than truth, and with fictions that are more valuable than reality’.

The second, about a hundred years later, is from Matthew Arnold's *Essays in Criticism*—

‘The poetry of later Paganism lived by the senses and understanding; the poetry of medieval Christianity lived by the heart and imagination. But the main element of the modern spirit's life is neither the senses and understanding nor the heart and imagination; it is the imaginative reason’.

Men of letters in Luther's century were still tapping their way out of the Middle Ages. Like the cave-men in Plato's parable, they stumbled, half-blind, into the light. We shall come immediately to some exemplars; and by their experience we may see that, despite romanticists and revivalists and medievalists born out of their own time, despite the glamour of the ‘Gothic’ centuries and their wealth of material for the muse, still, at the edge of them, it is good—that work of the Humanists and the Reformers, who enlarged the borders which we dwell in.

## CHAPTER VII.

### Europe at Large.

SIGNS and effects of Luther's protest were not confined to German soil and to neighbouring countries in the north. Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Calvin and Loyola, to give them names, distracted opinion in France. Spain was oppressed by the Inquisition, and the burnings at Smithfield in London remind us that the husband of Queen Mary Tudor was very son to the Emperor-King Charles V of Spain.

The ' spacious days ' were still to come. The free and full expatiation of the mind of Europe in the new time, when Shakespeare was to crowd his stage with all kinds and conditions of men and women, and Cervantes was to prove in *Don Quixote* that manners make the man, was still postponed for a while. A sense of terror in the background overhung the present generation. The fate of Sir Thomas More, who was beheaded, 1535, for a scruple of conscience against his king ; the fate of Stephen Dolet, a French printer, who was executed, 1546, for too much speculation about Plato's doctrine of immortality ; the fate of the Huguenots in Paris, who were massacred in 1572 : these facts discouraged free thought and placed an embargo on open speech. Writers on controversial topics wrote what they might, not what they would, and the range of controversial subjects was almost endlessly extended. Theology, politics, lay learning, were all included in its ambit, and these, and the last, especially, in the eyes of censors and spies, spread fairly comprehensive

nets. The least originality was unorthodox. It was dangerous to translate the Psalms, to discuss the governance of the State, or even, as Dolet found, to comment on Plato.

We are bound to take account of these facts. Students of literature would gladly ignore them, and, as far as possible, we shall do so. But we cannot do so all the way. They produced two marked effects on literature, neither of which can safely be neglected. The first was the tendency of advanced writers to cultivate an expedient wariness. They went slow, showing obscured lights. They circumnavigated their capes perilous by all kinds of tacks and ambiguity. And the next was the common resort, as prudent as it was polite, to the patronage of princes. A writer was freer behind the shelter of a Court than he was in the shadow of a cloister, still more than in the open market. Thus it happened, partly, at least, that court-songs, court-plays, court-novels, and court-treatises on morals and education formed the staple literature of the greater part of the sixteenth century.

Take the Court of Lyons, for example, in the reign of

#### QUEEN MARGARET OF NAVARRE (1492-1549).

No one pretends that this princess, who was sister to King Francis I of France, and who married as her second husband Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre, took any conspicuous part in the stirring times in which she lived. Her strength lay in her royal inconspicuousness. As the head of a minor Renaissance Court, Queen Margaret enjoyed a position of greater freedom and less responsibility than that of her illustrious brother. Under the guise of humanistic patronage she could give shelter to Huguenots and Reformers whose presence would have compromised the King of France; and, though once at least King



Francis had to protect her from Rome, as a rule her womanly wit and her genuine tastes and talents enabled her to welcome to her circle the most interesting men of her day. Even as stormy a petrel as Rabelais, to whom we shall shortly come, used to seek cover at her Court from obloquy and persecution.

Queen Margaret was an author on her own account. The ' Pearls of the Pearl of Princesses ' (*Marguériles de la Marguérite des Princesses*), a kind of Blanche Amory's *Mes Larmes*, were doubtless her own composition, and we can imagine the courtly deference with which these affected stanzas were admired in the royal entourage. Far more present interest attaches to the ' Stories of Fortunate Lovers ', to which the Queen put her name, and which a clever bookseller, Claud Gruget, called the *Heptameron*, 1559. His suggestion of the *Decameron* is obvious, and this masterpiece of the Lyonnese Court has strong affinities with Boccaccio's *novelle*. As one member of the Court circle, de Maçon, had translated the *Decameron*, and another had written French tales, it is not a fanciful assumption that several pens were employed on the book which bears Queen Margaret's sole superscription. Hers or theirs, or hers and theirs together, the *Heptameron* made a good show of tales less naughty than the *Decameron's*, though, on the whole (but not consequently), less amusing. Instead of the Plague at Florence, the *Heptameron* chose as background a season of

' such extraordinary rains, that it seemed as though God had forgotten his promise to Noah '.

It is the first serious introduction of the weather as a motive of fiction, and Queen Margaret's party of travellers suffered severely from the floods. Lives were lost and endurance was strained, under the

conditions, hardly conceivable to-day, of bad roads and worse inns. But a certain group of survivors met together in a habitable shelter, and conspired to forget their hardships and to pass the time of waiting by telling one another tales. This convention, too, we remember, was in vogue till the very end of the coaching-days, and supplied Dickens with some of his best chapters. They kept the tales up for seven days, and a graceful plot was woven through the intervals of the *Heptameron* (or, seven days). Most of the stories dealt with the fashionable, courtly topic of matrimonial misadventures and misdemeanours, and their comparatively inoffensive tone, a negative merit of some importance, is found, too, in the 'Pleasant Nights' (*Piacevole Notti*) of Giovanfrancesco Straparola, first issued at Venice in 1550, and frequently reprinted and translated.

The unofficial Prime Minister of the literate Court of Navarre was the Queen's secretary,

#### CLEMENT MAROT (1497-1544).

As the son of a *Rhétoriqueur* of some eminence, Clement was trained from boyhood to a careful use of words, which helped to prune his too glib facility. He criticized Villon's *Ballades* and the *Roman de la Rose* by the new standards of poetics, and he wrote a 'Temple of Cupid' in the aureate vein of allegory. His *Adolescence Clémentine* suggests by its fanciful title the *Marguérites de la Marguérite*. But Marot, though he lauded Crétin, gradually sang himself free from a blind allegiance to that master. His metrical renderings from the Psalter, always a red light to the Church, his epigrams, ballads, and songs for music, showed qualities of charm and dexterity which made him a model to French poets. He was a model to foreign poets, too, and his work at Queen Margaret's

Court was probably more valuable than his loyalty to his mistress let us know.

Two notes may be added for completion. First, the school of *Marotiques*, founded in Marot's name and honour, had to meet the factious opposition of the followers of a certain François Sagon, who trod resolutely in the worn way of rhetoric. Secondly, censorious critics did not spare this amiable Court-poet, and neither Queen Margaret nor King Francis could save him from conflict with Rome. His free handling of the Psalms, which 'became the French Marseillaise'<sup>1</sup>, aroused the agents and spies, whom Rabelais, as we shall see, found so wakeful. Once Marot was imprisoned, and wrote a prison-poem, *L'Enfer*. Once he fled to Geneva, where he found the regiment of Calvin too dour for his rose-water heresies; and he was again in exile at Piedmont when death overtook him.

We shall submit no specimens of Marotic poetry, so soon to be surpassed by Ronsard's school; nor will it be profitable to make an extended stay at Lyons. The city ranked, like Louvain and Basle, as a minor Florence of the day: 'the head of Celtic Gaul, flowering like another Ilion', as one of its own poets hailed it. Ronsard, to whom we are coming, called Lyons 'the lily of French cities'; and there, in 1564, he led the revels at the Treaty of Troyes, in celebration of an Anglo-French *entente*, now, happily, more durably established. There, too, lived and wrote Maurice Scève, whose long poem on earth and heaven attenuated Plato's mysticism through 4,580 verses. There, too, lived Antoine Héroet, whose 'Perfect Mistress', 1541, took the same way of idealizing sentiment; and there was Louise Labé (1526-66), known as the Sappho of France, whose sonnets and other lyric verse

<sup>1</sup> R. E. Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life*.

ring with genuine feeling. There Thomas Sibilet taught the law to poets, and there Bonaventure Despériers, Queen Margaret's Groom of the Chamber, sought to found a liberal rule of life midway between orthodoxy and reform (*Cymbalum Mundi*, 1538). Six years later he died, seeking by suicide, it is said, relief from persecution by Rome ; but he lived long enough to write his *Nouvelles Récréations et Joyeux Devis*, which are so closely akin to the style and spirit of the *Heptameron*.

Before quitting Lyons we should refer to an Italian pensioner of the French King, who frequented Queen Margaret's pleasant Court. We saw in the previous chapter how Vida and other Parnassians extracted from Aristotle and Horace sets of rules for the guidance of modern poets. At home in Italy they formed literary clubs, such as the Accademia della Crusca <sup>1</sup>, which took its rise as an offshoot of the Platonic Academy of Florence. Their representatives fared to foreign Courts, eager to quaff direct at the springs of Italian inspiration ; and among these missionaries of the poetic craft was a Florentine,

#### LUIGI ALAMANNI (1495-1556),

who, like Dante and Petrarch in their day, was an exile from his native city. Alamanni served as model to the Navarrais poets and poetasters, chiefly because of his skill in manipulating the new blank verse (*versi sciolti*, loose or released). This he displayed effectively in a Virgilian didactic poem on husbandry. Books I to IV of his *Coltivazione* discussed the four seasons on the farm ; Book V was devoted to the

<sup>1</sup> *Crusca* is, properly, the bran which a baker separates from flour. The Dellacruscan exquisites were at pains to sift out a Florentine language from neighbouring dialects. Their doughtiest member was Lionardo Salviati (1540-89), to whose bitter attacks on Tasso we may have occasion to return.

garden; and Book VI was a kind of 'Works and Days' reminiscent principally of Hesiod. Virgil, of course, was the great exemplar. Not the Virgil of medieval legend who guided Dante out of hell, nor the Virgil of Italian patriots who sang the deeds of the Latin race, but the Virgil of

'Wheat and woodland, tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd', the 'landscape-lover, lord of language', who was also Italy's national poet. This was he whom poets of the sixteenth century chose to con, and study, and emulate, in half a hundred didactic poems based on the model of the *Georgics*.

Nor was it only the *Georgics* which they imitated: Alamanni in his 'Farm', and Rucellai in his 'Bees'. Francesco Maria Molza (1489-1544) rendered the *Aeneid* into blank verse, and this version passed into the tradition of Tudor poetry in England. The development of *versi sciolti*, introduced from Italy into France, and its adoption as a national measure by the younger poets across the Channel, is one of the most fascinating signs of the community of letters at this date. And in that republic Queen Margaret was patron.

We come to a writer of larger powers than any budding *Marotique*. In or out of Lyons, though not of it, was

FRANÇOIS RABELAIS (c. 1494<sup>1</sup>-1553),

the French monk who broke his cloister and pressed his hot way to the upper air. He enjoyed protection in high places. King Francis from time to time spread the hem of his humanistic cloak over Rabelais' sins against authority, and the Queen of Navarre gave him grateful shelter. For a while he practised physic at Lyons, and at the end of his life he was

<sup>1</sup> See W. F. Smith, *Rabelais in his Writings*, Cambridge, 1918.

appointed *curé* of Meudon, by which title he is often called, though the idea of Rabelais as curate is as inappropriate almost as Sachs' description of Martin Luther as the nightingale of Wittenberg.

Rabelais was deeply versed in the literature of physics, chemistry, and travel, as those sciences were understood in his day; and his reflections and conclusions were conveyed, or, rather, disguised, in five volumes, torrential in vigour, and irrepressible in flood, of which the last was posthumously published in 1564. This work took final shape as 'The Inestimable Life of the Great Gargantua, Father of Pantagruel', and the romance thus shaped was translated into English by Sir Thomas Urquhart, or Urchard (1611-60), Knight of Cromarty, and Peter Anthony Motteux (1660-1718), a French immigrant scholar. Not that Rabelais had to wait till the seventeenth century for fame at home or acquaintance abroad. His humour, more broad than deep, his masterful way with language and ideas, and the extraordinary vitality and invention of 'the witty doctor' of the Renaissance, impressed contemporaries from the start, and made Rabelais a name of note to friends and foes alike. His book grew by experience of life. The first sketch was written as a story-book based on local legends of a giant of Touraine, 'The Great and Inestimable Chronicles of Gargantua', 1531. A continuation, 1532, introduced the *geste*, or deeds, of 'Pantagruel, King of the Dipsodes, Son of the Great Giant Gargantua'; and the five volumes were ultimately arranged as (1) 'Life of Gargantua, Father of Pantagruel'; (2) 'Life of Pantagruel'; (3) 'Heroic Life and Sayings of the Good Pantagruel'; (4) the same, with 'His Wonders and Voyages'; and (5) the same, with 'His Visit to the Oracle'. Thus, there are two parts to the romance; Gargantua, the father, in one book, and Pantagruel, the son, in four.



It is said that Grangousier, father of Gargantua, represented King Henry of Navarre, that Utopia was Navarre, that Pantagruel was Anthony de Bourbon, that Panurge was the Bishop Montluc, that Gargantua's shepherds were Lutheran preachers, that the thirsty Dipsodes were the Netherlanders, that Gargantua's thirst was the general desire for the restitution of the wine in the Eucharist, and so forth with every detail. It may be. But far more significant to the present value of the book is its success as psychology than as satire. Panurge as Bishop of Valence is comparatively indifferent to modern readers. But 'Panurge the Understanding—the pol-larded man, the man with every faculty except the reason' <sup>1</sup>, Panurge, whose 'main idea is the absence of all morality in the wide Aristotelian sense with the presence of almost all the other good qualities' <sup>2</sup>, is a poetic invention, a creation of fiction and imagination, who stands in the line of ascent to the characters of Shakespeare himself. It was a wild desire for release from the limits of conventional morality which invented the character of Panurge, and made him Pantagruel's companion on that hurly-burly journey to the Oracle, where the Goddess Bottle directed them to the divine maxim: 'Be yourself the expounder of your undertaking'; be yourself the captain of your soul.

Gargantua, like Gulliver, whose inventor owed so much to Rabelais <sup>3</sup>, is not studied for hidden meanings to-day. The open meaning is plain enough. Rabelais, as an exponent of philosophic doubt, rises from Bonaventure Despériers through Montaigne to Voltaire. 'The writings of Rabelais', says Buckle, in

<sup>1</sup> S. T. Coleridge, *Table Talk*.

<sup>2</sup> G. Saintsbury, *Short History of French Literature*. See, too, the same writer's *History of the French Novel*, vol. i.

<sup>3</sup> 'Swift was *anima Rabelaisii habitans in sicco*,—the soul of Rabelais dwelling in a dry place'. Coleridge, *Table Talk*.

his *History of Civilization in England*, 'were only directed against the clergy; but the writings of Montaigne were directed against the system of which the clergy were the offspring'. The distinction is sound, for Rabelais was never a very profound thinker; but the criticism is misleading, for his fun was truer than his earnest. *Le rire est le propre de l'homme*, he wrote on the fly-leaf of his romance, and the laughter of Rabelais, as of Shakespeare,

'Broad as ten thousand beeves at pasture',

lit up the face of the world-comedy. To explore the secrets of sensation; to see and hear and taste, without denial or gainsaying, in a new world crammed full of objects for investigation by the senses of man; to elude prohibition, and to outwit persecution; to laugh because the hour for weeping had gone by: this was the way of Francis Rabelais, like a prisoner released from Plato's cave, with the air of heaven in his nostrils and the light of the sun in his eyes, who unfolded the charter of ocean highways and fronted the day to be. And as he explored, he laughed; a little shamefacedly at first, as he fingered with prurient curiosity the old, lewd, forbidden things; then more and more carelessly and loudly, as the beauty of creation was unveiled, and the joy of possession was revealed.

And he made words, his servants, laugh with him. Rabelais' book, like Calvin's, was written in French for Frenchmen; not in Latin-edged aureate French for Crétin-Raminograbis and his followers. And, partly because French was new, partly because Rabelais' heart leaped within him, he swept into his full and turbid stream all kinds of topics and no-topics (*utopica*). He delighted in words for their own sake. He suppld and tamed them like living things, and no feature is more characteristic of his style than

the retinues of epithets in motley, which he dragged like a conquering king at the tail of a triumphal car of thought. For the sheer pleasure of display, he would go from digression to digression, to the complete neglect of any plan which he might have formulated at the start.

This feature has another aspect. None can deny that *Gargantua* is broad and gross and coarse. The epithet Rabelaisian convicts it by the connotation of indecency. These giants had prodigious appetites. A Gargantuan feast has become proverbial. The adventures began with a drinking-bout, and *Trinqu* (drink) was the final rule of conduct which Pantagruel learned from the Oracle. Not unjustly did Rabelais' enemies, pursuing him even after death, suggest that hams and sausages should be strewn on his grave instead of flowers. But the monstrous appetites of his giants had a more than literal meaning. We have to allow for the instinct of the hunted man. All through his life Rabelais was spied upon ; he had even to protect his protectors from the suspicion of harbouring an open heretic. So he practised every art of subterfuge. Out of his wide, vast reading he bemused the adversaries whom he belaboured. He sowed his thought with whimsy and mixed his wheat with tares, till the jealous eye slept again and the lithe prey slipped the shears. They were merely symbols of his creed : ' herb for the service of man, and wine that maketh glad his heart '. Through all the medley of the material, all the verbiage of the style, and all the foolery of the treatment, an increasing purpose can be traced. The book which opened with an orgy closed with a criticism of life. ' Rely on yourself. Trust experience. Play the man. Oust the ascetic. Take life with both hands open. Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we—live ! ' Such was the gospel of Rabelais, as he

waited for daybreak in France; and in this sense Coleridge touches the essential Rabelais with a firm and a sure hand, when he tells us—

‘Rabelais had no mode of speaking the truth in those days but in such a form as this; as it was, he was indebted to the King’s protection for his life. Some of the commentators talk about his book being all political; there are contemporary politics in it, of course, but the real scope is much higher and more philosophical. It is in vain to look for a hidden meaning in all that he has written; you will observe that, after any particularly deep thrust, Rabelais, as if to break the blow, and to appear unconscious of what he has done, writes a chapter or two of pure buffoonery. He, every now and then, flashes you a glimpse of a real face from his magic lantern, and then buries the whole scene in mist’.

We shall not distract the wise reader by questions of origin or succession. Let Lucian claim the wonder-voyage, and Folengo <sup>1</sup> the mixed-grill language. Let Sir Thomas More claim the honours of the Rabelaisian Utopia, where monks were to cease from troubling, and laymen might frankly follow learning; and let Johann Fischart (1548-89) and Nicodemus Friselin (1547-89) be exalted in Germany as satirists *à la Rabelais*. The great Frenchman’s true successors were large-souled writers like himself (Swift and Sterne were among them), who were visited by the comic spirit; his true home is in the hearts of men,

<sup>1</sup> Girolamo Folengo (1491-1544), an Italian monk, who, like Rabelais, broke his cloister. He wrote skits on the chivalric romances in a language known as ‘macaronic’, perhaps from the mixed contents of a dish of macaroni. (Cf. the derivation of satire, from *satura lanx*, a full dish.) Rabelais ridiculed the affectation more than once; e.g., ii, 11, ‘*beati dunces, quoniam ipsi stumblaverunt*’.

which he sought not idly to uplift by showing them the wine when it is red.

In an earlier chapter of this volume we quoted Sir Richard Jebb's statement of the ultimate purpose of the Humanists, that 'man was meant not only to toil and suffer, but to enjoy'. Humanism took its way, 'inlaid with patins of gold', but inlaid, too, with sombre errors, through the Renaissance in Italy and the Reformation in Germany, through Ariosto's romance of love, and Machiavelli's realities of politics, through Luther's protest of conscience, and the milder mediation of Erasmus, through the discoveries of the navigators, and the inferences of chemists and physicists—and still the heirs of the Humanists remained steadfast in the faith of Petrarch, their father: to preach the gospel of happiness, and to ennoble each man in his own being.

To call such men sceptics is a misnomer. Scepticism is a creed of negation; and these thinkers, though they might rebel against an authority unsupported by evidence and a rule of life which had forfeited its sanction, were makers, explorers, inventors, and dowered with the spirit of inquiry. There was something of Calvin and Rabelais, something of Calvin's revolt and of Rabelais' frank sensationalism, something, too, of the Shakespeare to be, in the attitude of a third great Frenchman of the sixteenth century, Michel Eyquem, *Sieur de Montaigne*, commonly known as

#### MONTAIGNE (1533-92),

after the name of his seat in Perigord.

Montaigne was a lawyer by calling, but retired in 1570, and spent the rest of his life in travel, society, and reflection. The results were embodied, 1580, in his *Essais*, Books I and II. A fifth edition, augmented

by Book III and by several hundred additions to I and II, appeared in 1588 ; and in 1595 Montaigne's adopted daughter, Mlle. de Gournay, saw a new edition through the press, enlarged again by about a third. This edition became the basis of the standard edition of Didot. Paris, four volumes, 1802.

The computation may be put in another way. Originally, Montaigne's *Essais* were ninety-three in number, with a French version of a Latin treatise by a Spanish theologian, entitled the *Apologie de Raymond Sebond*. The first fifty-seven essays in Book I occupied nearly as much space as the remaining thirty-six in Book II, and the thirteen essays added in Book III occupied more space than either. Thus, historians of the *essai* note that it grew by rapid stages. It began as a kind of commentary, an informal sermon, in the Roman sense of talk, tacked on to a text or heading, and from this it was expanded into the essay, as we use that term to-day. Thus, if Montaigne did not invent the name (and its paternity, which is unimportant, is disputed), he certainly invented the literary form, and a vivid, colloquial tone characterized it from the start. For Montaigne, though he borrowed, or shared, the philosophy of the reformers, did not follow either Calvin or Rabelais in the structure or balance of French prose. He set down as easily as he could the talk of a well-informed man, which was to aim, according to his own recipe, at being brusque rather than delicate, difficult rather than monotonous, more soldierly than forensic or pedagogic, unaffected, bold, and in undress. It was such talk as More held in Latin with the stranger on Antwerp quay, or as Erasmus held in the same language in any of his Colloquies.

Next, as to Montaigne's point of view : ' It is an absolute and quasi-divine perfection ', he declared, ' to know how to enjoy oneself loyally '. So far he



marched with Rabelais, and with the lords of the spirit of man from whom Rabelais traced descent. But the loyal enjoyment which Montaigne sought was more easeful and less strenuous than that of the author of *Gargantua*. He asked questions, searching and probing, but he did not always supply the answers. No breezes from Utopia were marked on his chart of the winds. So he became the father of the *libertins*, who became the fathers of the *philosophes*, and both sets of free-thinkers in France drove furrows, as we shall see, for the plough of the French Revolution. Voltaire unfolded from Montaigne, as the flower from the bud; *que sçais-je*, which was Montaigne's motto, contained the philosophy of this creed, from Hamlet's grave indecision to the honest doubt of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. But the promise was in the bud; the flower was what sun and wind might make of it.

For Montaigne was no revolutionary. Of the liberty of conscience he wrote—

‘ Il est ordinaire de voir les bonnes intentions, si elles sont conduites sans moderation, pousser les hommes à des effects tres-vitieux. En ce debat par lequel la France est à present agitée de guerres civiles, le meilleur et le plus sain party est sans doute celuy qui maintient et la religion et la police ancienne du pays ’<sup>1</sup>.

To him, as to other writers on statecraft from Machiavelli to Grotius, the ‘ present conditions of civil war ’ were always and necessarily a factor in determining political wisdom.

But at the same time he dared to think for himself. ‘ If philosophizing is doubting ’, he wrote—

<sup>1</sup> Book II, chap. 19. Quotations from a reprint of the 1538 edition, with the *var. lect.* of 1595. Paris, 1886. The antique spelling rather adds to the charm.

‘ Si philosopher c’est douter, comme ils disent, à plus forte raison niaiser et fantastiquer, comme je fais, doit estre douter : car c’est aux apprentifs à enquerir et à debatre, et au cathedrant de resoudre. Mon cathedrant, c’est l’authorité de la volonté divine, qui nous reigle sans contredit et qui a son rang au dessus de ces humaines et vaines contestations ’.

And then he related two tales from the annals of antiquity in order to illustrate his proposition—

‘ Il y a en la vie plusieurs choses pires à souffrir que la mort mesme ’<sup>1</sup>.

Consider, again, in an age when education was so far in the front of men’s thoughts, Montaigne’s views on the proper relation of children to their parents. They were so much in advance of common opinion that they would have sounded new-fangled even in the eighteenth century—

‘ J’essayeroy, par une douce conversation, de nourrir en mes enfans une vive amitié et bien-vueillance non feinte en mon endroit ; ce qu’on gaigne aisément envers des natures bien nées. . . . Je veux mal à cette coustume d’entredire aux enfans l’appellation paternelle et leur en enjoindre un’ estrangere comme plus reverentiale, nature n’ayant volontiers pas suffisamment pourveu à nostre autorité. Nous appellons Dieu tout-puisant, Père, et desdaignons que noz enfans nous en appellent : j’ay reformé cett’erreur en ma famille. C’est aussi folie et injustice de priver les enfans qui sont en aage de la familiarité des peres, et vouloir maintenir en leur endroit une morgue austere et desdaigneuse, esperant par là les tenir en crainte

<sup>1</sup> Book II, chap. 3.

et obeissance : car c'est une farce très-injuste, qui rend les peres ennuieux aux enfans, et, qui pis est, ridicules. . . . Quand je pourroy me faire craindre, j'aimeroiy encore mieux me faire aymer ' <sup>1</sup>.

Take, lastly, a passage from the *Essais*, in which Montaigne showed the way to almost innumerable successors in the pleasant art of literary criticism. To Amyot, who is criticized here, and whose French translation of Plutarch's *Lives* became, in its English version, the 'breviary' of Shakespeare's Roman plays, we shall have occasion to return—

' Je donne avec grande raison, ce me semble, la palme à Jacques Amiot sur tous nos ecrivains françois, non seulement pour la naïfveté et pureté du langage, en quoy il surpasse tous autres, ny pour la constance d'un si long travail, ny pour la profondeur de son sçavoir, ayant peu développer si heureusement un autheur si espineux et ferré ; . . . mais sur tout je lui scay bon gré d'avoir sceu trier et choisir un livre si digne et si à propos, pour en faire present à son pays. Nous autres ignorans estions perdus, si ce livre ne nous eust relevez du borbier : sa mercy, nous osons à cett' heure et parler et escrire ; les dames en regentent les maistres d'escole ; c'est nostre breviaire ' <sup>2</sup>.

We return for a moment to

#### POLITICS,

in which Montaigne had counselled moderation. But how to obey that sage counsel in the distracted sixteenth century ? With no moderation in affairs, was moderation in judgment attainable ? Montaigne's philosophic *que sçais-je* might save him from

<sup>1</sup> Book II, chap. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, chap. 4.

inconvenient conclusions, but the atmosphere of civil war in which he moved led more specialist writers on statecraft to investigate causes and to propose remedies, which culminated at last in the greater political treatises of Alberico Gentili (1552-1608), Richard Hooker (1553-1600), and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645).

These three jurists—an Italian, an Englishman, and a Dutchman—invented the principles, though they could not wholly inure the practice, of a civilized law of nations. Among their near predecessors we find a little group of thinkers, whose speculations in political philosophy tended to concentrate attention on the urgent problem of regicide. Were there or were there not circumstances which justified the removal by force of a ruler who exceeded his mandate? Survivors of 1572, with its terrible Massacre of St. Bartholomew, were disposed, especially in France, and more especially among the Huguenots, to write their tractates on the State round this theme, and, so far as such tractates claim literary rank, a brief notice is due to them here.

The *Anti-Machiavel* of Innocent Gentillet, which was directly inspired by the Massacre, was mentioned in our section on Machiavelli. Like-minded writers in this class were John Ponet, sometime Bishop of Winchester, and Stephen de la Boétie, who enjoyed the friendship of Montaigne. François Hotman (1524-90) wrote *Franco-Gallia* in 1573, as a reasoned plea for more liberal institutions. Its motive is found in Queen Catherine de Medici, who was the prime object of Huguenot detestation, and the butt of a philippic likewise ascribed to Hotman. A Swiss theologian, named Lüber (or Lieber), and commonly known by the Greek equivalent Erastus (1524-83), published Latin controversial writings, which took shape definitively in a pamphlet, designed, we are

told, 'not to magnify the State, nor to enslave the Church, but to secure the liberty of the subject' <sup>1</sup>. A less sympathetic interpretation earned Erastus cordial hate, especially in Scotland, where Erastianism ranked as a kind of heresy. But we must forgo these theological disputations. The question has even been asked, Was Erastus an Erastian?, and it is fair to conclude that the views associated with his teaching have become 'in some respects far broader than anything he seems to have suggested' <sup>2</sup>.

Passing over the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* of 1579, formerly ascribed to Hubert Languet, the French statesman who was Sir Philip Sidney's friend, but more probably attributed to Philippe du Duplessis-Mornay (1549-1623), we reach, finally, four writers of considerable influence in their own day and with good claims to present renown. (1) Philip Marnix (1538-98), French by birth and Dutch by exile and adoption, used in a strenuous age the significant motto, *Repos ailleurs*. It must be admitted that he gave as little rest as he asked. He was always a doughty champion of the Calvinists at Geneva, and his ardent 'William of Nassau' had the vogue of a *Marseillaise* in Holland. Marnix was pamphleteer as well as poet. He issued in 1569 a flaming tirade 'against the Holy Roman Church', which he called the Bee-hive (*Bienkorf*), because of its sting, and this satire was greeted with immense enthusiasm by the whole Protestant community of Europe. A Spanish Jesuit (2) Juan de Mariana (1536-1623), and a French Huguenot (3) Jean Bodin (1530-96), both discussed in historical writings the arguments for and against tyrannicide. Mariana's Latin *de Rege* (Book I, chap. 6, is the crux) was repudiated by the Jesuits,

<sup>1</sup> J. N. Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings*.

<sup>2</sup> Hallam, *op. cit.*

who doubtless shrank from the odium of its conclusions. His later and more valuable work was a Latin history of Spain, which he afterwards translated into Spanish (Calvin, too, we remember, was his own translator), and which extended to thirty volumes. Bodin's *République* was published in French in 1577 : the significant pivot of 1572 is to be observed in all these instances. Bodin admitted as a principle the subjects' right of execution against a tyrant-usurper ; but, broadly, the *République* may be counted on the side of the absolutists, and, in a Latin version effected for the use of the universities, it became a favourite text-book in the seventeenth century. Like so many writers on politics in the wake of Martin Luther, Bodin was well versed in the Old Testament, and the Hebraic cast of his thought and style caused a rumour to be spread of his conversion to Judaism. There is no ground to assume that Reuchlin's defence of Hebrew books ever made so thorough a convert, but a Latin dialogue, *Heptaplomeres*, which Bodin wrote in later life, and which discussed seven several creeds, seems to indicate monotheistic leanings. This topical subject of regicide, which it is impossible not to regard as the main concern of politicians in the present age, was discussed, too, by (4) George Buchanan, an eminent Scottish Latinist, in *de jure regni apud Scotos*. Buchanan, who has been praised by critics as diverse as Dr. Johnson and William Wordsworth, once enjoyed a reputation only a little lower than that of Erasmus. His Latin Psalter was used as a text-book in Scottish and German schools, and twice was set to music ; and his Latin history of Scotland, Latin plays, satires, epigrams, and elegies, appealed to large classes of readers. But an age which neglects the classics is not likely to listen to echoes of them, and a revival of Buchanan is unlikely.



Similar considerations rule out many brave and keen

#### MIDDLEMEN OF CULTURE,

who contributed powerfully to the enlargement of the mind of Europe in this epoch. They flitted to Switzerland and the Netherlands, calling, perhaps, at Lyons on the way, from less hospitable or liberal climes; and there they founded presses and wrote dictionaries, translated and edited and compiled, and lived lives adventurous by circumstance and noble by zest of adventure.

The tragic fate of Stephen Dolet, the French printer, was noted above. Here we add a dozen names, notable in the history of scholarship <sup>1</sup>, notable, too, in several instances, for personal sacrifice in the sacred cause of learning, but partaking, in a history of literature, of the Socratic quality of midwifery.

Such men were the printers and publishers, who risked imprisonment, or worse, for their enterprise: the Etienne (Stephen) family in Paris and Geneva, Plantin and Elzevir in Leyden, and Johann Froben in Basle. Among the greater scholars whom they served, and whose names have not yet been mentioned, were—

DENYS LAMBIN, editor of Horace and Lucretius <sup>2</sup> ;  
killed by the shock of the Massacre of St.  
Bartholomew, in which his friend de la  
Ramée fell a victim ;

ADRIAN TURNEBUS, a Royal Reader under  
Francis I's foundation in Paris ;

<sup>1</sup> Reference should be made to Sir J. E. Sandys' *History of Classical Scholarship*, vol. ii.

<sup>2</sup> H. A. J. Munro, in his edition of *Lucretius*, 1864, wrote of his French predecessor in the sixteenth century: 'Lambin's ungrateful countrymen . . . have made *lambin* or *lambiner* classical terms to express what is diffuse and tedious'.

JACOB JUSTUS SCALIGER (1540-1609), 'the Younger', as distinct from his father, noted above; his *Thesaurus Temporum* ('Treasury of History') has earned him the proud title of 'founder of historical criticism'<sup>1</sup>;

ISAAC CASAUBON (1559-1614), who took refuge, finally, in England, and is buried in Westminster Abbey;

JUSTUS LIPSIUS (1547-1606), of Louvain and Leyden, and again of Louvain, when he was reconverted to the Church of Rome, and resigned his Leyden Chair of History to Scaliger;

NICOLAI CLEYNAERTS, a Brabant Humanist, whose Greek Grammar, 1530, marks a stage in the study of that subject;

JAN BAPTISTA HOUWAERT (1533-99), the 'Brabant Homer', writer of learned allegorical poems;

JOHN PALSGRAVE, an English grammarian, whose *Eclaircissement de la Langue française*, 1530, was immensely useful to French students in Tudor times;

THOMAS WILSON, whose *Arte of Rhetorique* is said to have been used by Shakespeare;

—*Gyasque, Thoasque*. They were great men in their own day, and they did great service to pure letters by their special studies in philology and rhetoric. It would be ungrateful to say less.

More permanent literary value belongs to a second group of writers—critics, teachers and translators—who were also efficacious in this century in the important task of facilitating the labours of men of letters. If a distinction, however artificial, may be drawn between one group and another (and all assortment of this kind is merely a matter of con-

<sup>1</sup> Sir J. E. Sandys, *op. cit.*

venience), we should say that the writers now enumerated aimed more directly at a popularization of learning. The first were the university dons, the second the university extensionists.

Jacques Amyot (1513-93), for example, who held office as Bishop of Auxerre, was called prince of translators for the sake of his noble French renderings of Greek novels by Longus and Heliodorus, and of the *Lives*, 1559, and *Moralia*, 1572, of Plutarch. It was the *Lives* which Montaigne called 'our breviary', and which Sir Thomas North translated from Amyot, to the eternal advantage of Shakespeare's stage. It is noted that Amyot's task was useful in enlarging the French vocabulary, apart from the charm of his book as a model of French prose. He had to find native equivalents for Greek terms such as 'enthusiasm' and 'panegyric', which had done duty in Europe hitherto only in Latin forms. Similar service was rendered to the technical vocabulary of arts and crafts by the writings of Bernard Palissy (1510-89), a French Huguenot potter, who has been compared with William de Morgan (1839-1917), an English potter-novelist of French descent in our own day.

Good service was rendered to literature by three English editor-printers, at intervals, roughly, of ten years. (1) Richard Tottel's so-called Miscellany was issued in 1557, under the title of *Songs and Sonnets, written by the Rt. Hon. Henry Howard, late Earl of Surrey, and Others*. The 'others' were hardly less significant than Surrey, the translator of the *Aeneid*, to whom we shall come back; and Tottel's Miscellany, which was partly compiled by Nicolas Grimald (1519-62), was very largely instrumental in substituting Continental models for the long-drawn tradition of Chaucerian allegory in England. (2) William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, which followed in 1566, contained a hundred and one tales from the

chief collections in Italy and France, and helped to give its foreign tinge to the early Tudor Renaissance. A fanciful variant of Painter's *Palace* was the *Petite Pallace of Pleasure*, issued by (3) George Pettis in 1576; and these three, though the chief, were not alone in bringing the fruits of French poetry and fiction home to Queen Elizabeth's subjects. We add here the name of Nicole Denisot (1515-59), a Frenchman resident in London, who was tutor to the daughters of the Duke of Somerset. Perhaps he may fairly be described as the last courtier of Queen Margaret of Navarre, for, to the delight of friends of the *Entente*, including the great Ronsard himself, Denisot's pupils wrote Latin elegies in memory of the Humanist queen.

Of Johann Sturm (1507-89) and Roger Ascham (1515-68), who, in Germany and England respectively, were teachers by theory and practice, a passing mention must suffice. Our last notice in this section on the middlemen is due to two learned writers, a Spaniard and a German, whose work was particularly valuable for its enhancement of prose-style. (1) Juan de Valdes wrote historical dialogues on the policy of his master, the Emperor Charles V, whom we met at the Diet of Worms as well as in his kingdom of Spain. But de Valdes' more serious work was a *Dialogo de la Lengua*, dated c. 1535, in which two Spaniards and two Italians seek the wells of Castilian undefiled. We shall see very shortly how close were the links between Italy and Spain. (2) Conrad Gesner (1516-65), whose 'prodigious erudition' is duly notified by Hallam, was a German-Swiss naturalist, with a garden of botanic specimens at Zurich. He was the first scientific student of comparative philology, and the first compiler of an 'every man's library' of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew books, with critical notices of the entries. But Gesner's foremost title to present fame

is his appreciation of mountain-scenery. He used to climb the Alps once a year, and his attitude towards nature-study was new in the literature of the day. Petrarch has left a fine account of his ascent of Mont Ventoux (north-east of Avignon) on April 26, 1335, which would seem to be the earliest example of a kind of descriptive writing practised in later days by Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, Leslie Stephen, and other men of letters. But Petrarch wrote in Latin, with his eyes fixed on the eternities—

‘ I only wish that I may accomplish that journey of the soul, for which I daily and nightly sigh, as well as I have done this day’s journey of the feet, after having overcome so many difficulties ’.

Gesner wrote in German prose, and climbed ‘ partly to study the flora, partly to refresh my mind ’; an entirely modern point of view.

We have seen that to scale the heights of learning, and to bring down flowers of erudition with Stephen Dolet or Pierre de la Ramée, was a far more venturesome enterprise than to climb the Alps with Conrad Gesner. We have seen, too, that Rabelais and others, as alert as, though less original than he, had to steer a very careful way between self-expression and persecution. And we remarked, at the opening of this chapter, that the safest refuge from the perils of the age was to seek the patronage of a prince, and to write behind the cover of a Court. But before we come to the courtly writers who followed Clement Marot of Lyons, and to the courtly books of which the *Heptameron* was a type, there is still one special branch of literature, more vigilantly watched by Rome even than politics and learning. Politicians and scholars might offend by attacking outlying provinces of the majesty of the Church. Poets, as we know,

might offend by translating the Psalms into modern verse. But writers on

### THEOLOGY

itself were in the very heart of the Pope's preserves, and a terror lurked in every bush. Even the holiest livers were not immune from persecution. Take the Spanish pietists, for example, at the time of the Spanish Inquisition. Perhaps the most saintly man in Spain and the nearest in spiritual ardour to the German mystic, Thomas à Kempis, was Luis Ponce de Leon (1527-91). Yet we may say of him, in the words of Virgil, the favourite poet of the Renaissance—

‘Nec te tua plurima, Pantheu,  
Labentem, pietas nec Apollinis infula texit’.

His alleged Jewish origin was seized upon as a pretext for a particularly close scrutiny of his lectures on the Bible at Salamanca, and, whatever the cause, he was committed to prison from March 27, 1572, to September 28, 1576: more than four years robbed from a pious life devoted solely to works of learning and to tasks of Biblical exegesis. He had written a Spanish version of the Song of Songs, and herein may have lain his offence. But the dungeons of the Inquisition hid their secrets, and Ponce de Leon was grateful enough to be restored to the light before the end. It is said that, after his release, he reopened his lectures at Salamanca with the brave, obliterating words, *Dicebamus hesternæ die*, ‘As we were remarking on the last occasion’. Ponce de Leon's Spanish works included treatises on ‘The Names of Christ’ and on ‘The Perfect Wife’; his odes, especially ‘The Serene Night’, have a rare simplicity and grandeur, which suggest the future poetry of William Wordsworth.

Ponce de Leon was appointed editor of the



literary remains—a saint editing a saint—of Teresa de Cepeda de Ahumada (1515-82), who was beatified in 1614, and canonized eight years later. ‘I can hardly doubt’, he declared, ‘that the Holy Ghost is speaking through her in many passages’. These passages occurred in Teresa’s religious poetry, which appealed forcibly to the imagination of sacred and mystic writers in later centuries. As Loyola has been called the brain, so Santa Teresa had been called the heart of the Counter-Reformation. Yet she, too, was seldom free from vexatious surveillance by the Inquisition. More than once it arrested the activities of San Juan de la Cruz (1542-91), Teresa’s most devoted follower; and another victim of the Inquisition in Spain was Juan de Avila (c. 1500-69), whose ‘Spiritual Letters’, especially one ‘For all Estates’, have been highly and justly praised. Avila was beatified in 1894, but already in 1830 Victor Hugo had hailed him as Saint Jean, in tribute to his lyrical mysticism, so valuable to French romance at that date.

We submit two specimens of this sacred verse, each translated from the Spanish by an American poet. The first, containing the last stanzas of an ode by Ponce de Leon, suggests, in William Cullen Bryant’s version, a divine variant of Shelley’s *Skylark*—

‘ From His sweet lute flow forth  
Immortal harmonies, of power to still  
All passions born of earth,  
And draw the ardent will  
Its destiny of goodness to fulfil.

‘ Might but a little part,  
A wandering breath, of that high melody  
Descend into my heart,  
And change it till it be  
Transformed and swallowed up, oh love ! in Thee ;

‘ Ah, then my soul should know  
Beloved ! where Thou liest at noon of day,  
And from this place of woe  
Released, should take its way  
To mingle with Thy flock and never stray ’.

The second, rendered from Sta. Teresa by Longfellow, is entitled her 'Book-mark'—

'Let nothing disturb thee,  
Nothing affright thee ;  
All things are passing ;  
God never changeth ;  
Patient endurance  
Attaineth to all things ;  
Who God possesseth  
In nothing is wanting :  
Alone God sufficeeth'.

So we return to the courtly writers.

Their wit, most diligently cultivated, was composed of several elements. It was partly a refuge from plain speaking, with its attendant penalties and perils. Even Tasso, as we shall see in the next chapter, though restrained by pure and noble taste, deliberately aimed in places at bewildering his critics. Another part of wit was its heritage from the courtly diction of the Troubadours. The love-lore of minstrelsy was native to it, and produced an effect of affectation, or, at least, of over-ornament, even in some of the best examples. And a third part of courtly wit was the courtiers' sheer delight in a display of learning for its own sake. A writer, using his native language instead of medieval Latin, was anxious to prove the new language as well-bred and allusive as the old. And, when all the origins of wit were forgotten, and all the motives were removed, courtly writers rioted in wit for no other cause than that it pleased them. They liked to retire from the common world and from the ordinary discourse of men, and to use precious diction in rare air for the mere gratification of the senses.

This wit, set flowing in every country which enjoyed the boon of a Renaissance Court, produced at last immense reforms in the art of literary style. If we may suggest in one sentence the total effect of these reforms, it will be found in the rapid breakdown

of the long tradition of Latinity, which had held Erasmus in thrall. Learned writers still wrote in Latin, and the wholesome practice of Latin verse was maintained till a very recent date. But the daughter-language overtook the mother. *Matre pulcra filia pulcrior*; and we shall see in a later generation how French criticism and French taste dictated the law to Europe.

It was in prose-style especially that the work of the wits was wanted. The bondage of rhyme and metre imposed its restrictions on poets; and, though the French Pleiad in this epoch, riveting those bonds more closely, helped to make them an ornament, not a yoke, yet the reformers of style in prose had a longer leeway to recover. They had to invent for modern tongues the rhythmic movement of sentences, the logical sequence of argument, the breaks and connections of paragraphs, the legitimate ornaments of style, and all the various devices, more subtle than metre and rhyme, which were to regulate and limit former primitive experiments in prose. How were these changes to be brought about? It is true that the courtly writers were not lacking in good examples. Translators 'pursued their craft in the spirit of bold adventure which animated Drake and Hawkins'<sup>1</sup>. Drake and Hawkins themselves contributed largely to the same end, for voyagers, planters, and soldiers then, as always, brought home new words. Rabelais was distending the dictionary. Calvin was teaching construction. Montaigne was showing the charm of an easy undress in colloquy. The Greek orators, Isocrates especially, who excelled in ornament and polish, were studied for manner as well as for matter; and, above all, the vernacular Bibles were familiarizing every tongue with the splendid passion of the Prophets, the spiritual ardour of the Psalmist, and

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. iv.

the epigrammatic antitheses of the Wisdom-literature. Not all the fires of the Inquisition could burn these marks out of modern prose.

One thing more was needed for completion. In order that writers might avail themselves of all the resources of rhetoric, some pool or clearing-house of taste, some central focus of literary activity, was more and more urgently required. It took a hundred years to set it up. In 1637, as we shall see, the French Academy was established precisely to satisfy this need. But the Academy was not a sudden arbiter, such as that which Matthew Arnold in the nineteenth century sought to impose on British taste. Like a written constitution, it grew up out of antecedent conventions. Throughout the intervening century, little, tentative academies—Baif's in Paris and Harvey's in London we are coming to—bore witness to the focal need and to the centripetal tendency. And always an academy presupposed a Court: the Platonic Academy at Florence, nursed into vigour by Cosimo de' Medici, may stand as a signal instance. The Court-wits everywhere at this time formed natural academies of taste, before they were definitely incorporated into Areopagus, Athenæum, or Academe.

This is the secret of the success of a movement of prose-style in the sixteenth century, which, though not confined to England, nor necessarily original in that country, is most famous by its English name of Euphuism, after the *Euphues*, or *The Anatomy of Wit*, 1579, of

JOHN LYLY (c. 1554-1606).

Lyly's wit was trained at the universities and exercised at Court, and in these congenial surroundings he contrived to bring to a head the several modes of effective diction which were current in his age.

Principally, Euphuism was medieval. The name seems first to have occurred in a pamphlet (1589) by Gabriel Harvey, a busy lawgiver to poets, and leader of a literary Areopagus. Harvey invented it to describe a particular vice of Lyly's style, which consisted in the excessive use of phenomena from physics and natural history by way of similes and metaphors. Lyly ransacked the old *Physiologi*, beloved by the authors of the Reynard romances, and quarried the beast-books, bird-books, flower-books, and shell-books of medieval fabulists, for the quaint images and fancies with which he delighted to bedizen his pages. We may take a simple example from near the beginning of *Euphues*—

- (1) ' He that will carry a bull with Milo must use to carry him a calf also, he that coveteth to have a straight tree must not bow him being a twig. The Potter fashioneth his clay when it is soft, and the Sparrow is taught to come when he is young. As therefore the iron being hot receiveth any form with the stroke of the Hammer, and keepeth it being cold for ever, so the tender wit of a child, if with diligence it be instructed in youth, will with industry use those qualities in his age '.

The medieval feature in this argument for training the child when it is young, the feature which Harvey selected as euphuism proper, consists in the iterated parallels drawn from animal-life, vegetable-life, and mineral-life. The calf, the twig, the clay, the sparrow, and the action of the hammer on the iron are all invoked to point the conclusion, that the lessons of youth will become the habits of age.

Plainly, this style in excess might develop into a nuisance and an affectation. The difficulty was, to draw the line—

- (2) 'Is not the Diamond of more value than the Ruby, because he is of more virtue? Is not the Emerald preferred before the Sapphire for his wonderful propertie? Is not Euphues more praiseworthy than Philautus, being more witty?'

This seems to us a poor trick of style, more effectively employed just below—

- (3) 'If he perceive thee to be won with a Nut, he will imagine that thou wilt be lost with an Apple: If he find thee wanton before thou be wooed, he will guess thou wilt be wavering when thou art wedded'.

The precious stones in (2) have no relation to the 'more witty' quality of Euphues, but the apple in (3) suggests, by the token of the fall of Eve, the change of a wanton bride to a wavering wife.

A thoroughly normal specimen of the euphuistic manner will be found in the following paragraph—

- (4) 'The filthy sow, when she is sick, eateth the Sea Crab, and is immediately re-cured; the Tortoise, having tasted the Viper, sucketh *Origanum* and is quickly revived; the Bear, ready to pine, licketh up the Ants and is recovered; the Dog, having surfeited, to procure his vomit, eateth grass, and findeth remedy. . . . And can man, by no herb, by no art, by no way, procure a remedy for the impatient disease of love?'

Euphuism on this level became a snare to weaker writers, and was laughed at by Shakespeare in his early plays—

- 'Though the camomile, the more it is trodden on,



the faster it grows, yet youth, the more it is wasted, the sooner it wears ' <sup>1</sup>.

Still, there was more in Lyly's style, as Shakespeare shows us even in those few words, than the lavish ornaments from still life, by which Harvey chose to characterize it. Note in (1) the following scheme of words—

with diligence	with industry
instructed	use
in youth	in age

And, having made this note of word-balancings as an element in sentence-construction, read, finally, another passage from *Euphues*—

- (5) ' I have lost Philautus, I have lost Lucilla, I have lost that which I shall hardly find again, a faithful friend. Ah, foolish Euphues, why didst thou leave Athens, the nurse of wisdom, to inhabit Naples, the nourisher of wantonness? Had it not been better for thee to have eaten salt with the Philosophers of Greece than sugar with the Courtiers of Italy? '

Here are no characteristic euphuisms, in the narrower sense of that word, no sows, or sea-crabs, or tortoises, to illustrate or elongate the argument. Here is the prose-style of Europe in the making; the resources of medieval rhetoric chastened by humanistic art. ' Wisdom . . . wantonness ', ' salt . . . sugar ', ' philosophers . . . courtiers ': here are alliteration, antithesis, assonance, parallelism, paradox, inversion, balance, emphasis; all the marks of sensitiveness to style, which, whatever their sources in French allegory or Greek oratory, were combined by the Court-wits of the sixteenth century in the *complexus*

<sup>1</sup> 1 *King Henry IV*, ii, 4.

of modern prose. In a Preface to Lyly's plays, dated 1632, it was written: 'That Beauty in Court who could not parley Euphuism was as little regarded as she which now there speaks not French'. Observe the past tense in this remark, and observe the new fashion of French on the eve of the French Academy. For the formal vogue of euphuism was short-lived. Lyly's animals returned to their ark, his birds and flowers to their volucraries and herbaries. But the reforms which he brought into English speech, and which corresponded to similar reforms in prose-narrative in other countries, proved valuable and enduring. In a wider sense than Harvey knew, we are all euphuists to-day. Lyly's example, marred by the hyperbole common to pioneers' efforts, conferred immense benefits on style. There is euphuism in Macaulay and Ruskin, though neither writer consciously euphuized. Whenever a writer aims at a logic of style, at a co-ordination of thought, at a rhythmical disposal of words, at graphic and striking phrases, at evenly balanced sentences, at a harmonious use of ornament, he aims in the spirit of the conscious stylists who were called after the name of Lyly's *Euphues*.

For the sake of John Lyly, accordingly, and the Court-wits whom he represents, we may forgive, while we forgo, the follies of hunting the letter and chasing the 'inevitable' word, and all the tricks, points, and conceits of preciosity and pedantry, which accompanied the reform of style in prose. There were even monstrosities of books, which, from beginning to end, made a feature of omitting one letter of the alphabet. Such mannerisms are a malady of growth. They are plain symptoms of a disease, which is now called futurism in art; and, while they possess pathological interest, they disappear when the future becomes the present. To this limbo of time's illusion we may

commit the contemporary fame of a Spanish poet, Luis de Gongora (1561-1627), and an Italian poet, Giambattista Marini (1569-1625). The *cultismo*, or *culteranismo*, which traced its descent from Gongora, and the Marinism derived from Marini, were merely mechanical exercises which seemed inspired in their own day. But even these had their uses in the work of testing and refinement, to which style and diction were submitted in this age, when modern languages were moulded to lay services, and powers, faculties, and sensibilities, hitherto unsubstantial and remote, were brought down from heaven to earth.

We pass to some of the lay workers in this brilliant process of refinement.

A prose treatise of lasting influence on the Courts of the Renaissance was *Il Cortegiano* ('The Courtier'), 1516, of

#### BALDASSARO CASTIGLIONE (1478-1529).

Castiglione balances Machiavelli, and the courtier the prince. The one writer had shown the interior of the mechanism of the prince, the other showed the exterior of the appearance of the courtier. When princes were unpopular, as among the Huguenots in 1572, we saw that Machiavelli was quoted as devil's advocate. Kings and Courts were indebted to Castiglione for repairing the effects of the exposure. Unconsciously, but not the less effectively, *Il Cortegiano* condoned *Il Principe*; the perfect courtier presumed a worthy prince.

Castiglione, like Ariosto, spent his life in the service of Italian Renaissance princes. On the sunny terraces of Urbino, the winds of faction passed him by, and his 'Wits' Bible', as the *Cortegiano* has been called, had an instant and an abiding success. He would seem to have read in MS an Italian book

written by a Spanish Jew, commonly known as Leo Hebreo. Abravanel, to give him his right name, wrote certain 'Dialogues of Love', current in Italy, Spain, and France, where they were praised by Montaigne; and traces of his Platonizing vein are found in Castiglione's treatise. But the ultimate source of the 'Courtier' is Athens. Attic grace and nobleness direct it; Greek love of learning and the open air, above all, the Greek principle of moderation, and the Greek art of concealing art, govern the search in the dialogue for the perfect courtier's ideal. Men and women of note took part in it: among them, the Duchess of Urbino and Cardinal Bembo, the flawless Ciceronian whose idolatry stirred Erasmus to protest. And, far beyond the circle of Urbino, Castiglione's gentleman of the Renaissance became a type for courtly emulation. Sir Philip Sidney embodied it in England, Vittoria Colonna (1490-1547) in women's life in Italy; and the cultured elegance of the dialogue, which was frequently reprinted and translated<sup>1</sup>, its humane and gentle teaching, its generous receptivity to the forces which were adding beauty to strength, exalt the endeavours of Court-wit.

A second invitation to courtly manners was written by

#### ANTONIO DE GUEVARA (c. 1480-1545),

Bishop of Guadix and Mondonedo, and Confessor to the King of Spain who was also the Emperor Charles V. Guevara's wit was displayed in a volume, part-history and part-romance, published in 1529, and entitled, 'Dial of Princes, with which is incorporated The Very Famous Book of Marcus Aurelius'. This 'very famous' addition to the 'Dial of Princes' was famous chiefly in Italy, where Guevara, sojourning

<sup>1</sup> Into English, by Sir Thomas Hoby, 1561.

from Spain, alleged that his narrative was founded on a Florentine MS. Later critics have handled severely Guevara's historical pretensions; but he continued to write pleasant books in a 'romance of history' strain, and published, among other works, *Decada de los Cesares* (Englished as *Tenne Emperours of Rome*), 'Familiar Epistles', known to Montaigne as the golden epistles, and treatises on favourites, courtiers, and working-men.

It is as the author of *Relox de Principes*, however, translated by Sir Thomas North into English as the *Dial of Princes*, 1557, and into French, Italian, German, Dutch, Latin, and other tongues, that Guevara made his name, and the *Dial's* reputation rests on the vivacity and allusiveness which the learned Bishop brought to his task. He aimed at setting before the King of Spain a final model of knightly virtue, and his book is to be compared with Xenophon's *Cyropædia* as well as with *Il Cortegiano*. Its alliterative style, its sententiousness and involution correspond to features in Lyly's *Euphues*; but much of Guevara's Spanish wit was spilt in North's rendering of the *Dial* from an intermediate French version, and the direct influence of Guevara's work on Lyly's was probably small.

More significant was the Spaniard's influence on the revival of courtly romance. In the ease and leisure of Court-life, the great books of old time were re-read, and re-written to suit current standards. Especially remarkable, for example, was the renewed interest in this period in the tales of

#### AMADIS OF GAUL,

a hero of Bretagne and the Arthuriad, to whom we referred in Chapter I. Noting again that Gaul (Gaula, Galles) is Wales, and that Amadis traced his

descent backwards through Languedoc to the Welsh hills, we find that a Spanish *Amadis*, with additional exploits of Esplandian, son of Amadis and Oriana, was published, c. 1508, by Rodriguez de Montalvo. Within another dozen years the cycle was enlarged to a dozen volumes by Portuguese, Italian, and other novelists. At this stage its real history begins. Amadis was Welsh by birth and Spanish by adoption. He became French by resurrection and renown. His French patron was King Francis I, who is said to have been beguiled by the tales when a prisoner of war in Spain, 1525-26, and the French translator was Nicholas Herberay des Essarts, whose twelve books of *Amadis and Esplandian* were issued in Paris, 1540-56. We are told that their publication 'marks the birth of the modern political and heroic novel'<sup>1</sup>; and, as far as such dates are trustworthy in a continuous process of development, we may accept the statement as correct. For *Amadis of Gaul* in its French dress, and the *Pa merin* stories of the same epoch in Spain, seized the languid imagination of fashionable Paris in the seventeenth century, and gave rise to a series of novels, courtly, romantic, exotic, to which we shall come in due course. 'Le beau ténébreux' of this vogue, the dark, handsome lover with a past and a distance, was still vigorous in the Rochester of *Jane Eyre*, and, perhaps, we may trace his last decline from Celtic strangeness and Breton chivalry in the polite diction of the *Lovers' Letter-writers*, which Victorian maids were wont to lay to heart.

Still within the Court-convention were the six books of a pastoral romance of the Arcadian type, entitled, *Diana Enamorada*, 1542-49, and written in

<sup>1</sup> H. Körting, *Geschichte des Französischen Romans im XVII ten Jahrhundert*.



Spanish prose, intersected with admirable verses, by a Portuguese poet,

JORGE DE MONTEMAYOR (c. 1521-61).

The danger of 'becoming a shepherd, and of running wild through the woods and fields', of which Don Quixote was warned by his niece, is less menacing to worthy knights to-day, and Montemayor's *Diana*, which Bartholomew Young rendered into English, 1598, and which reappeared in Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, has lost its fashionable interest. Historically, however, it is important as a link in the pastoral chain between the *Arcadia* of Sannazzaro in Italy, and the Elizabethan *Arcadia* of Sir Philip Sidney, to whom we presently come.

Adventure, too, started from the Court. Discovery hung on princes' passports, as Queen Elizabeth's seamen were to learn, and an early Court-poet of Portugal, who beat out his heart to sea-music, was the epic singer of Portuguese navigators,

LUIS DE CAMOENS (1524-80).

Camoens' life was one long struggle against adverse fortune in love and war, and the unhappy record has predisposed posterity to a favourable estimate of his muse. He was haunted by the sounds and scents of the Indian (Pacific) Ocean, which his countrymen had been the first to explore, and his *Os Lusíadas* ('The Lusíads', so called from a mythical Lusus, fabled ancestor of the Portuguese) celebrated their exploits. Camoens brought to his poem a great-hearted, patriotic spirit, a personal love of adventure, and an elegant, flowing diction, for which he chose the metre of the stanza in eight verses, imported from Italy's *ottava rima*. Like Joseph Conrad in our day, he

turned his own experience of seafaring to admirable use as a marine poet—

‘ Thus went we forth these unknown seas to explore,  
Which by no people yet explored had been ;  
Seeing new isles and climes, which long before  
Great Henry, first Discoverer, had seen ’.

War and travel—the terms were interchangeable—filled many volumes in this epoch. Especially in Spain and England, who were disputing the mastery of the sea, great courtiers honoured their sovereigns by recounting their adventures on sea and land. Thus, Alonzo Erzilla of Luñiga, who attended King Philip II on his nuptial journey to England, wrote a long epopee, *Araucana*, on a Spanish South American campaign, which Voltaire immensely admired. Gonzola Oviedo of Valdés and Bartolomé de las Casas were fighting historians both, and were each acquainted with Columbus. The gallant Hurtado de Mendoza (1503-75), whose fine maxim was *études*, wrote a history of the Moorish rebellion, 1568-70, published 1627, under the title of *La Guerra de Granada*. He took Sallust as his model and fairness as his motto, and the pleasantest impression is made by this work of military history, composed by a statesman and poet who came of pro-consular stock. Thus, too, Sir Walter Raleigh and Richard Hakluyt were among the Tudor Imperialists (to borrow a term from a later age), who made noble prose of national seapower. Hakluyt, a scholar and divine, with indefatigable industry and the true Renaissance curiosity, wrote three volumes of *Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation*, 1589 and 1598-1600, which should be much more widely known than they are. The three hundredth anniversary of Hakluyt's death was celebrated in 1916, in the midst of the Great War, when ample tribute was paid to the splendid spirit of the old scholar, who

would have appreciated better than any the unbroken faith to the tradition of the great sea-captains of Elizabeth. Raleigh, who perished in 1618, touched life at more points than at sea, and finally lost it on the scaffold. He is described by a recent editor as

‘ one of the greatest courtiers, the greatest admirals, the greatest soldiers, and the greatest explorers of his day, who also found time to be an active member of Parliament, a poet, a musician, and an historian, and spent his leisure time at sea in the study of chemistry ’<sup>1</sup>

—a breathless record, according to modern standards, though Castiglione might have put it by as nothing out of the common for a *cortegiano*. Raleigh’s works included a *History of the World*, 1614, from the Creation to the rise of the Roman Empire, a task which occupied him in prison. His *Report of the Truth of the Fight about the Iles of Açores, this last Sommer, Betwixt The Revenge, one of her Majesties Shippes, and an Armada of the King of Spain* was issued as a pamphlet in 1591, seeing that the Spaniards

‘ were not ashamed in the year 1588, when they purposed the invasion of this land, to publish in sundrie languages in print, great victories in wordes, which they pleaded to have obtained against this Realme ’.

Such ‘ victories in words ’ are won in every war, and it is good to go back to this report, admirably rendered by Tennyson into verse as immortal as Raleigh’s prose, and to read its words corresponding to valiant deeds.

A French Huguenot, Theodore Agrippa d’Aubigné (1550-1630), wrote, like Raleigh, an *Histoire*

<sup>1</sup> G. E. Hadow, *Sir Walter Raleigh : Selections*.

*Universelle*. His *Vie, à Ses Enfants*, is more enthralling. It was a busy, noble career, devoted to an attempt to reconcile the Muse of the Renaissance with the Church of the Reformation; and d'Aubigné's *Tragiques*, in Alexandrine couplets, burn with wrath and indignation, akin in sublimity to Dante's.

A fascinating side-track of adventure would introduce us to the diarists and memoirists, who, especially in France, adorned this era of new prose. Blaise de Monluc, for example, wrote military *Commentaires*, which have been called the soldiers' Bible, and compared with the 'commentaries' of Julius Cæsar. But the sea-epic of Camoens and the company of sailors and soldiers are leading us too far from the main branches of Court-literature; and we return from our digression to the Spanish, English, and French Courts, and to three movements in poetry which produced permanent results.

These three schools of poetic wit were so nearly contemporary, and were joined to one another by so many ties forged in Renaissance thought, that we may set in parallel columns the names of the chief writers in each country—

SPAIN	ENGLAND	FRANCE
JUAN BOSCAN (c. 1490-1542). GARCILASSO DE LA VEGA (1503-36).	THOMAS WYATT (1503-42). EARL OF SURREY (c. 1517-47).	<i>The Pleiad</i> : PIERRE DE RONSARD (1524-85) and six others.

Even so, the concatenation is not complete, for Spain had sat at Italy's feet to learn the lessons of the Renaissance. In the year 1526, Andrea Navagero, whom we met above as poet and critic, was Venetian Ambassador to Spain, at the Court of the King-Emperor Charles V. At Granada in that year he met the Spanish writer, Juan Boscan, and the record of their intercourse is written in Boscan's letter to the Duchess of Sorna—

‘ As I was discussing with him matters of wit and letters, he asked me why I did not make an attempt in Castilian at the sonnets and other poetie forms employed by good Italian authors ; and he did not refer to this merely casually, but he urged me to undertake the experiment. A few days afterwards I travelled home, and on the long and solitary journey I had an opportunity of thinking over what Navagero had said. So I began to practise this kind of poetry. Presently—perhaps we grow to be fond of the children of our own brain—it seemed to me that my experiments were proving successful, and my taste for them gradually increased ’.

In this detail of biography we see the Spanish Renaissance in the making. Boscan illumined it like a Pleiad, and Navagero lent him his light. Since Cicero shone upon Petrarch, ‘ like a γνώθι σεαυτὸν from Heaven ’, as Coleridge said of Wordsworth in a later day, no mental revolution was accomplished with such sudden and personal force.

So Boscan ‘ began to practise ’ the modes of Italian poetics. The Renaissance in Spain was assisted by the memory of the *entente*, founded in 1443 when King Alfonso V of Aragon became by conquest Alfonso I of Naples. The Neapolitan school of poetry in the latter half of the fifteenth century had been frankly hybrid and compound, and Navagero’s suggestion in 1526 fell on ears inured to Italian sounds. But Boscan’s Italianate experiments were not uniformly successful. He translated Castiglione’s ‘ Courtier ’, and indeed he could have found no purer vessel in which to convey to another country the springs of Renaissance culture. He wrote Spanish blank verse, the *versi sciolti* of the Virgilizers, who were purifying the mediæval streams. He devoutly imitated Bembo, the Ciceronian cardinal of Rome, whose pedantry

irritated Erasmus. Within the limits of his powers he naturalized the sonnet in Spain, and reproduced the linked triads of Dante and the octave stanzas of Boecaccio and Ariosto. He could do no more for Spanish poetry; the rest depended on his successors; and he and they had to meet the opposition of reactionaries and conservatives. These *Petrarquistas*, as the Spanish poets after Petrarchan models were called, encountered attack in the old ways from writers as eminent as Cristobal de Castillejo (c. 1490-1556), who tried to laugh the innovators out of court—literally, out of the Spanish Court at which they set up their foreign standards. The old guard of Spanish letters was known as the Salamanca school, and the new poets were known as the Sevilians, after the name of Seville. Thus, Navagero's disciples in Spain, starting with Juan Boscan, set new lines for Spanish poetry. To their contemporaries, doubtless, they seemed futurists, iconoclasts for the love of breaking images; but, 'seen at a distance, in the perspective of literary history, Boscan appears to us as the founder of a new poetic dynasty, the head of an irresistible advance-guard' <sup>1</sup>.

The first irresistible assault upon old-time metres and diction was made by 'the famous poet' (we owe the epithet to Cervantes), Garcilasso de la Vega, who was a kind of Aaron to Boscan's Moses. He turned to full harmonies of Spanish poesy Boscan's half-inarticulate music. He was master where Boscan was apprentice; master of the Italian Renaissance in Spain, where Boscan had been apprentice to Navagero.

Garcilasso died young, as his dates show; and this, too, was a part of his fame.

'Tomando ora la espada, ora la pluma',

'wielding at one time the sword, at another the pen,'

<sup>1</sup> J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *Littérature espagnole*.



he wrote (*Eclogue*, III) of his activity as a soldier-poet, and the phrase has justly become proverbial. For the poet's service in Spain's wars was matched by the soldier's to her poetry. He was mortally wounded in battle, and his brief, illustrious career may be compared with Sir Philip Sidney's in his own or with Rupert Brooke's in the present century.

And what did Garcilasso write? The slender volume of his verse was included, appropriately enough, in a posthumous edition of Boscan, edited by his widow, 1543. In thirty-eight sonnets, five odes, two elegies, three pastoral eclogues, and one epistle in blank verse, Garcilasso firmly founded the Italianate school of Seville. He was a very Virgil of the West. He caught the undertones of Virgil, the allusive, melancholy music, which was romantic before the era of romance, and which is best described as *morbidezza*. Thus, Garcilasso de la Vega was a poet by patent of his own right as well as by imitation of the ancients and derivation through Boscan from the Italians. His followers included Francisco de Saa de Miranda (c. 1485-1558), who wrote an elegy, *Nemoroso*, to his memory; Hernando de Herrera, who edited his poems, and wrote a life of Sir Thomas More, and whose love-verse to a granddaughter of Columbus is worthy of the age and of the man; and Hernando de Acuna, poet-laureate to the Emperor Charles V.

Passing from Spain to England, from the rivals in arms to the brothers in art, we come first to

#### SIR THOMAS WYATT,

who was knighted in 1536, and whose fatal illness was contracted on an embassy for King Henry VIII. Wyatt, Queen Anne Boleyn's lover, was twice imprisoned in the Tower; but his political vagaries are

insignificant to-day in comparison with his labours as a poet. Like Boscan, he helped to transpose the key of national poetry, and to win it to a new allegiance to the muse of Clement Marot and Alamanni. Wyatt, too, like Boscan, was at pains to naturalize the sonnet as an English measure ; and, considerable though his success as an Italianate, he commanded gifts as a musician (Castiglione required them from a courtier), which stood him in even better stead. It is rather for the freedom of his lyre than for his foreign fetters, however valuable these proved, that Wyatt's name is commonly mentioned as the first considerable poetic talent between Chaucer and Spenser in England. 'Renaissance influences', as Palgrave remarked, 'long impeded the return of English poets to the charming realism' of the following ditty, which he cited from Wyatt in the *Golden Treasury*—

' And wilt thou leave me thus ?  
     Say nay ! say nay ! for shame !  
     To save thee from the blame  
     Of all my grief and grame.  
 And wilt thou leave me thus ?  
     Say nay ! say nay !

' And wilt thou leave me thus,  
     That hath lov'd thee so long,  
     In wealth and woe among ?  
     And is thy heart so strong  
 As for to leave me thus ?  
     Say nay ! say nay !

' And wilt thou leave me thus,  
     That hath given thee my heart  
     Never for to depart,  
     Neither for pain nor smart :  
 And wilt thou leave me thus ?  
     Say say ! say nay !

' And wilt thou leave me thus,  
     And have no more pity  
     Of him that loveth thee ?  
     Alas ! thy cruelty !  
 And wilt thou leave me thus ?  
     Say nay ! say nay !'

If Sir Thomas Wyatt was England's Boscan, her  
Garcilasso de la Vega was

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY.

He was son to the third Duke of Norfolk, cousin to Queen Anne Boleyn, and brother-in-law to the Duke of Richmond, King Henry VIII's natural son. These exalted connections were not altogether to be desired in the uneasy times of Harry Tudor, and Surrey's distinguished career as a soldier-poet, like Garcilasso, ended at the scaffold on Tower Hill. Like Garcilasso, too, Surrey was a typical *cortegiano*. His wit was admirably displayed in his elegiac verses to Wyatt—

- ' A tongue, that served in foreign realms his king ;  
Whose courteous talk to virtue did inflame  
Each noble heart ; a worthy guide to bring  
Our English youth by travail unto fame.
- ' An eye, whose judgment none affect could blind,  
Friends to allure, and foes to reconcile ;  
Whose piercing look did represent a mind  
With virtue fraught, reposéd, void of guile.
- ' A heart, where dread was never so imprest  
To hide the thought that might the truth advance !  
In neither fortune loft, nor yet repress,  
To swell in wealth, or yield unto mischance '.

But Surrey's travail was greater than Wyatt's, and he achieved more for England's fame. He was no blind or casual Italianate. He naturalized Italian measures into English verse, and he showed by practical dexterity how and why the changes were required. Thus, his English sonnet differed from the Italian by dividing the first twelve verses into three stanzas of four lines each, and by closing the poem with a couplet, in distinction to Petrarch's model of eight verses *plus* six (octave and sestet). Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth were to prove the value of this reform. Thus, too, he took from Alamanni (or more directly, from Molza) the hint of

narrative blank verse, and employed it for the translation of Books II and IV of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Since this measure was destined to become the chief national English metre, replacing, and gradually ousting, the heroic couplets of Chaucer and Pope, we submit, for historical interest, Surrey's

'Conticuere omnes, intentique ora tenebant',

the first lines in blank verse in English poetry—

'They whistéd all, with fixed face attent,  
When prince Æneas from the royal seat  
Thus 'gan to speak. O Queen! it is thy will  
I should renew a woe cannot be told:  
How that the Greeks did spoil, and overthrow  
The Phrygian wealth, and wailful realm of Troy:  
Those ruthful things that I myself beheld;  
And whereof no small part fell to my share.  
Which to express, who could refrain from tears?  
What Myrmidion? or yet what Dolopes?  
What stern Ulysses' wagéd soldier?  
And lo! moist night now from the welkin falls;  
And stars declining counsel us to rest.  
But since so great is thy delight to hear  
Of our mishaps, and Troye's last decay;  
Though to record the same my mind abhors,  
And plaint eschews, yet thus will I begin'.

Lord Surrey's method with the English language in verse was based on a reasoned study of its true genius and capacity, and was rather a development than a new departure. For instance, he cultivated and improved a native measure known as the poulterer's, doubtless because of the analogy of fourteen eggs to a dozen. This metre consisted of rhymed couplets in alternate verses of twelve and fourteen syllables, and, though it led to some jog-trot writing, much excellent poetry was composed in it. For the sake of a passage from Shakespeare, we may select an example, not from Surrey's own works, but from Thomas, Lord Vaux (1510-66), who is prominent in the Tudor song-books. It is called *The Image of Death*, and the double rhyme in the middle of

each distich is an additional, though not an invariable, feature—

' A pickaxe and a spade, and eke a shrouding sheet,  
A house of clay for to be made for such a guest most meet.  
Methinks I hear the clerk, that knolls the careful knell,  
And bids me leave my woful work, ere Nature me compel '.

This was the song which the grave-digger in *Hamlet* (v, 1) was singing from memory at his work—

' A pickaxe, and a spade, a spade,  
For and a shrouding sheet :  
O, a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet '.

The light of Garcilasso in Spain, the light of Lord Surrey in England, both paled in the light of

PIERRE RONSARD,

and his company of the Pleiad in France—

' Mignonne, allons voir si la Rose,  
Qui ce matin avait desclose  
Sa robe de pourpre au soleil,  
A point perdu cette vesprée,  
Les plis de sa robe pourprée,  
Et son teint au vostre pareil.

' Las ! voyez comme en peu d'espace,  
Mignonne, elle a dessus la place,  
Las, las, ses beautez laissé cheoir !  
O vraiment marâtre Nature,  
Puisqu'une telle fleur ne dure  
Que du matin jusques au soir.

' Donc, si vous me croyez, Mignonne,  
Tandis que votre âge fleuronne  
En sa plus verte nouveauté,  
Cueillez, cueillez votre jeunesse ;  
Comme à cette fleur, la vieillesse  
Fera ternir votre beauté '.

*Translation.*

' Sweetheart, let us see if the rose,  
Which to the sun did unclosed  
This morning her raiment so fine,  
Hath not dropt this eve every fold  
Of that raiment of purple and gold,  
And the rose-flush tender as thine.

‘ Alas, in how little a space,  
 Sweetheart, down below in her place,  
     Her beauties, alas, she must shed.  
 O Nature, harsh stepmother thou,  
 Since e’en such a blossom is now  
     From morning to evening dead.

‘ So, Sweetheart, be guided by me :  
 As long as thy beauties may be  
     Green, fresh, as they are at this hour,  
 Gather, O gather, their prime !  
 Full soon devouring Time  
     Will wither them, like a flower.’

Our translation, we are aware, is poor. None but a Tudor poet could do justice to the rose of the Renaissance, which symbolized all the joy in life, all the melancholy of mortality, all the feeling for life as its own object, and for earth as its appointed home, which flooded the senses of men, so lately released from other-worldliness. Ronsard’s song to Mignonne, as it happened, did not find a Tudor translator, though the note which he struck was echoed by more than a score of Tudor poets. We submit this version, accordingly, because we reach here for the first time a set of verses responsive to Pagan sentiment, yet wearing no fetters of Pagan speech ; true, pure, delicate, musical, as any song by Catullus or a Greek anthologist, yet modern in every phrase and every heart-beat. We may trace the rose of the Renaissance backwards through Florentine voices to Greek ode and Roman elegy. We may recall the idyll of Ausonius (309-92), translated by Addington Symonds in a fascinating essay on this subject <sup>1</sup>—

‘ Pluck roses, girl, when flower, when youth is new,  
 Mindful the while that thus time flies for you’,

and remark how nearly Ronsard’s language is the same as that of the Latin poet. But, with the rising of the Seven Stars of the French Pleiad, we have done

<sup>1</sup> ‘The Pathos of the Rose in Poetry’ in *Essays, Speculative and Suggestive*. Meredith’s ‘Love in the Valley’ is in the line of descent from the Greek-Anthology-Renaissance rose.



with tepid imitation, Latin aureation, and the like. The middlemen's work is completed. Modern poetry, the heir of all the ages, can select its treasures and recombine them, and make new poetry all the while. Ronsard's

‘ Mignonne, allons voir si la Rose ’

is the first French poem since Villon ; without exception, the first modern French poem, for Villon, too, kept to medieval forms.

Here, then, is the importance of the Pleiad, which took its name from a Greek group in Alexandria. It held a kind of Court Commission on French poetry, and likewise on French poetics. The terms of reference to the Commission (to the seven self-appointed commissioners) were briefly : How to make French poetry the equal of Latin and Greek. Not the echo, but the equal. ‘ Are we inferior to the Greeks and Romans ? ’ asked Joachim du Bellay (1524-60) in the first manifesto of the new school, *la Défense et Illustration de la Langue française*, 1549 ; and he answered his own question in a tone of eager, imperative creation. French satire was to be detached from its cradle of medieval allegory. French drama was to be released from its swaddling-clothes of the Mystery-play. French long poems were to be written on topics consecrated by French history. French sonnets were to be founded on Petrarch's, French odes on Pindar's example ; and a new Greek manuscript, just discovered by the printer-scholar, Etienne, and ascribed to Anacreon, was to furnish other measures for lyric verse. This was the Court Commission's report. Imitation and limitation were to go. When new words were wanted, they were to be invented, and a plentiful supply of words was the surest sign of poetic strength.

Not all the recommendations were acted upon.

Ronsard and his company did not accomplish all that they set out to do. Their long poems proved a dreary failure, and their drama never came to birth. Their greatness was rather in the ease with which they manipulated the French language, slowly perfected, as every instrument must be, for the purpose which it had to serve. They did for poetry what Rabelais did for prose : they gave it a serviceable language. And when the reaction against Ronsard had spent itself, when Boileau's ' Enfin Malherbe vint ' had ceased to sound Ronsard's doom, and when Malherbe's ' Ici je ronsardisais ' was no longer a note of self-reproach, at last Ronsard came back to his own, and the verdict of the nineteenth century reaffirmed the enthusiasm of the sixteenth. For the Pleiad, whatever their mistakes, aimed high at true objects. Ronsard looked out of his own eyes. He marked April's tears and laughter. He *heard* the song of the lark rise leaping to the sky, and *saw* the bird's fall back to earth. Thus observing, noting, expressing, and constantly improving his expression, Ronsard became du Bellay's final argument. The ' prince of poets ', as he was called in his generation, published four books of *Odes* in the year after the appearance of the *Défense*, and the case for the defence was proven. French poems had been written in the French language. A French poet had equalled the Greeks.

Of the Court Commission's chief recommendations for the French master-poets to be, Ronsard attempted three : the ode, the sonnet, and the epopee. In the two first he succeeded brilliantly, and his *Franciade* was at least a brave experiment in the third. The measured stateliness of Pindar, the tender diminutives of Catullus, Horace's curious felicity, the fire and charm of the Anacreontics, the grace of Petrarch and Bembo, and hints communicated from Spain, were all assimilated by Ronsard to the genius of his native

tongue. He studied the words in his verse, the letters in his words, and the rhythm of the verse which they composed. He expelled definitely from French poetry the languid long-winded devices of old-fashioned allegory, and the pretty insipidities of the *Rhétoriciens*. England particularly is grateful to him for his influence on Spenser, and for his attitude towards the *entente cordiale*, and thanks are due to Mary Queen of Scots, who commanded his constant devotion.

The six other Stars in the Pleiad may be more briefly enumerated. (2) Du Bellay's short lead we have noticed, as author of the *Défense et Illustration*. He wrote, too, a little book of sonnets, inscribed to Mlle. de Viole, and entitled, anagrammatically, *Olive*; sonnets on the 'Antiquities of Rome', which Spenser rendered into English, and several other little volumes. (3) Remi Belleau (1528-77) translated the newly-founded 'Anacreon', and helped to sing April into fashion in his lyric *Bergerie*. (4) Etienne Jodelle (1532-73) was the dramatist of the Pleiad. He revived Greek tragedy so thoroughly that he was accused of the impiety of sacrificing a goat to Dionysus. Alike in temperament and achievement, Jodelle was the Marlowe of the French stage, and his *Cléopâtre* and *Didon* are still noteworthy to-day. Jodelle, too, was a sonneteer, and his sonnet-sequence is one of several which anticipated Shakespeare's to W. H. The founder of the Pleiad's Academy was (5) Jean Antoine de Baïf (1532-89). It had as its object 'de renouveler l'ancienne façon de composer des vers mesurés pour y accommoder le chant pareillement mesuré selon l'art métrique'. These ancient quantitative metres were so foreign to the genius of French speech that the principles and the academy proved short-lived. But de Baïf's creed had a purging effect, and his example recurred in the Areopagus, founded

in London, 1579, by Gabriel Harvey, who sought to impose similar rules on English poets. Finally, the two remaining Stars were (6) Pontus de Tyard (1521-1603), who quickly exhausted a not powerful vein, and (7) Jean Dorat or Daurat (1508-88), who had taught Ronsard Greek.

And what was the sum of their achievement, their total contribution to European letters? For one thing, they invented the little book. Du Bellay's pamphlet of forty-eight pages, Ronsard's sheaves of slender *Poems* and *Odes*, were no mean gain in an age accustomed by weary experience to long medieval meanderings. The older writers had tended to be voluminous. Commonly, they opened at the Flood and worked down through Plato and the Schoolmen to the topic immediately in hand. The 'learned brigade' of the Pleiad seemed to know where to begin and when to leave off; and, though futurist writers in every age have affected at times wide margins and limp lambskin covers of vacuity, we are grateful to the first futurists in Europe for reviving from Alexandria the sound practice of the salutary proverb, μέγα βιβλίον, μέγα κακόν, 'a big book is a big nuisance'. Next, we are grateful to the Pleiad for their example of the splendid insolence of youth. Not till Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites, and not in their instance with similarly wide results, were the charm and confidence of young men combined to such effective vigour. In 1549 none of the Seven Stars had passed his twenty-fourth year, except Tyard, who was only twenty-eight. They expected, as young men will, to reap the harvest while they sowed; and the correctness of French taste in the next century, starting with Malherbe (1555-1628), curbed and checked and pruned, and sought authority and precedent where Ronsard had improvised and invented. The Dictionary of the French Academy and the

severe regiment of Boileau (1636-1711) had no use for ἀπαξ λεγόμενα, or bold innovations of speech. 'On ne réfléchit pas', it has been cleverly said, 'au temps du Roi Soleil, que le soleil même a un mouvement' <sup>1</sup>.

These later literary arbiters, and the new-old rules which they invoked, belong to the centuries of Reason which succeeded the centuries of Romance. Here we observe that the criticism was by no means wholly unjust. The 'learned brigade' moved too quickly. They imported more than they could carry. They were too certain of immortality, and lived too freely on one another's applause. There is something oppressive in the calculation, which we owe to Sir Sidney Lee <sup>2</sup>, that 1,686 out of 3,516 poems by Ronsard, du Bellay, and Baif were sonnets *al Italico modo*, often rendered direct from the Italian. The word output seems more appropriate than inspiration, and we are disposed hereafter to question the sincerity of sonnet-sentiment. But, when all detractation is satisfied, there is still more for praise than for blame, for admiration than for adverse repute. It is the music cultivated by this training, taught by Dorat in his college, sought by du Bellay in his treatise, and caught by Ronsard in his poems, which makes the Pleiad famous through all ages. Their solid achievement in French poetry is comparable to nothing in history, except, perhaps, to the invasion of Roman literature by Greek, which Nævius, the old Latin poet, confessed his inability to stem. Further, the Pleiad, to abandon its starry metaphor, acted as a European clearing-house of the Italian Renaissance. All that Petrarch had aimed at in his Italian poems passed through Ronsard and his company into the currency of European tongues. Their small change

<sup>1</sup> Jusserand, *Ronsard*.

<sup>2</sup> *French Renaissance in England*.

was better than their bank-notes. It was of these that Ronsard himself wrote—

‘ Les Français qui mes vers liront,  
S’ils ne sont et Grecs et Romains,  
En lieu de ce livre ils n’auront  
Qu’un pesant faix entre les mains ’.

We shall not dispute his judgment. The slighter poems of the Pleiad are full of brave eloquence and shining song ; but the *Franeiad*e, it must be conceded, has a heavy and turgid effect, for which our defective Hellenism is not solely at fault.

Omitting here the minor Ronsardists, the busy writers of sugared sonnets, French *Iliads* and Julius Cæsar plays, there remain for notice, in connection with the Pleiad, one prose-satire and one epic-poem.

Du Bellay had hoped for a satirist, and our exposition of the aims of the Pleiad will have been inadequate indeed, if it is not clear that they inclined to the Huguenot camp in France. Where else were youth and ardour and zeal and indiscretion to be found but among the rebels and the image-breakers, so constantly in collision with Rome ? The Reformation was one movement with many branches ; and it was to satellites of the Pleiad, accordingly, in the generation after the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, that a certain Pierre Leroy repaired, when he was editing a Huguenot manifesto published in 1594. King Henry III was dead. His assassination in 1589 had congealed that topical interest in the killing of kings which we noted in a previous section. Meanwhile, King Henry IV, deeming Paris ‘ worth a Mass ’, had turned Roman Catholic, and his comfortable presence in both camps encouraged the reconciling hope that a *via media* could at last be found. The *politiques*, a centre party, were quick to seize the opportunity ; and Leroy found his chief contributors in two Ronsardizing poets, Jean Passerat (1534-1602) and Gilles



Durant (1550-1615). The resulting satire by various pens was known later as the

SATYRE MÉNIPPÉE,

recalling the memory of Menippus, a cynic philosopher of Syria. As satire, it was not unworthy of the countrymen of Rabelais. Its foolery and its illusion of seriousness in the exposure of narrowness and intolerance were as brilliant in parts as the old 'Letters of Obscure Men' at the dawn of the Protestant Reformation. In religious history and in literature alike this late offshoot of the Pleiad in France holds a more secure place than most of the pamphlets of the time.

To the same impetuous movement belonged the forgotten epic poems of

GUILLAUME SALLUSTE DU BARTAS (1544-90).

Whether stirred by jealousy or prudence, Ronsard was never anxious to promote du Bartas to his firmament. Yet, more brilliantly than any of the Seven Stars, du Bartas satisfied du Bellay's aspiration for long poems written in French. True, he did not write them round themes from French history. His *Semaine*, on the Creation of the universe, published in 1578, and his *Seconde Semaine*, which he left unfinished, went to the Biblical subjects, later so popular with the Puritans, but never much in favour with the Pleiad poets; and the Protestant Ronsard, as du Bartas has been called, has been better liked in England than in France. Milton in *Paradise Lost* owed him something in eloquence and colour. Sir Philip Sidney, earlier than Milton, sought his intercourse and friendship, and William Wordsworth, later than Milton, wrote that

'All Europe once resounded with his praise; and when his Poem was translated into our language

[in 1592-1605, by Joshua Sylvester], the *Faerie Queen* faded before it'.

We close our notice of the Pleiad with this triple chord of poets' praises.

Yet in another sense our notice of the Pleiad is never closed. The enlargement of European letters, which these poets' activity brought about, is still the foundation of poetic liberties, despite the reaction of French taste in the seventeenth century; and first among foreign writers who shone in the light of the Seven Stars was Du Bartas' friend, the English courtier,

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY (1554-86).

' Silence augmenteth grief, writing increaseth rage,  
Stal'd are my thoughts, which lov'd and lost the wonder of our  
age. . . .

Knowledge his light hath lost, valour hath slain her knight,  
Sidney is dead, dead is my friend, dead is the world's delight'.

So wrote Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, in poulter's measure, in 1593, and there was more sincerity in his epitaph than sometimes characterizes such utterances. 'The world's delight', 'the wonder of our age', were no excessive terms of eulogy for the youthful knight of Queen Elizabeth, whose heroic death in the field at Zutphen added a nation's gratitude to his rare intellectual renown.

Sidney's father, Sir Henry Sidney, had been thrice Lord Deputy of Ireland, and was owner of Penshurst Place. His mother was a daughter of the Duke of Northumberland, whom Queen Mary Tudor had executed, and the Duke's son, Sidney's uncle, was Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, famous as Elizabeth's favourite. Noble by birth, Philip Sidney was fastidious by training. Kings, statesmen, and artists met him on equal terms. William of Orange's proverbial silence yielded to Sidney's charm. The

Italian painters, Veronese and Tintoretto, Giordano Bruno, the philosopher, Frobisher, the voyager, Hakluyt, the voyagers' historian, Languet, the French bishop-humanist, were all included in his circle. His tastes and character had crowned him with a reputation for gentleness and courtesy unique in a life so short. Great books were dedicated to him in his lifetime, and, when he died, the fluent writers of his age, headed by Brooke, his biographer, inscribed more than two hundred poems to his memory. He was the type of Castiglione's ideal courtier, and he surpassed that ideal by a certain inflexibility of moral temper native to the Renaissance in the North.

The lyric, the pastoral, and poetic theory were the three forms chosen by Sidney to express his message to the age, and he was so fully seized with the aims of Ronsard, Baïf, and the Pleiad, that he joined the literary club founded by Gabriel Harvey (the *Areopagus*, 1579) for the reform of English prosody on classical lines. We may regret that allegiance. There is something disconcerting in the convention of courtly proprieties of verse on the eve of Shakespeare's public stage, and Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie* (written about 1580, published 1595), though eloquent, learned, and often inspiring, was not altogether free from the limitations of its Italian predecessors. He objected to the commingling of high and low, near and distant, rustic and polite; he objected, as we saw, to the *Shepherd's Calendar*, as unworthy of Theocritus and Sannazzaro; and he failed to see that dramatic psychology would so soon overwhelm dramatic rules. But he proved, satisfactorily enough, and this was the purpose of the treatise, that poetry has laws of its own, which entitle it to honour and respect, and a continuous history, which changes of language do not interrupt; and he achieved his main end, so to regularize and

standardize poetic forms as to make them worthy of cultivation at the learned Courts of the Renaissance.

His practice was even better than his theory. When we are told that Sidney wrote a sonnet-sequence, entitled *Astrophel and Stella*, we remember the flood of sonneteering, spread from Italy to France, and are disposed to expect a Court-lover's poems to a Court-mistress. For the way of a man with a maid was the way of Petrarch with Laura, and we still go a-courting when we woo. But it is possible to underestimate the sincerity of the sonnet-writers in this age. Certain phrases recur, it is true, as a part of the accepted convention, and the sonnet's measure itself imposed restraints in its kind. Still, these recurring features did not exclude originality. For purposes of enjoyment, at any rate, which, after all, is the chief aim of literature, it is as just, or nearly so, to read the lyric love-verse of Sidney and Shakespeare and the rest of the Pleiad and Tudor poets with the same detachment from their sources as the sonnet-sequence called *Modern Love* by George Meredith in the nineteenth century. None has been disproved to express certain modes of personal experience and an individual point of view.

Sidney did not pretend that love was new—

‘The birds, beasts, stones, and trees feel this, and, feeling, love’.

Were not the volucraries, bestiaries, lapidaries, and herbaries full of it? What was new was Sidney's love for Stella—

‘To you, to you, all song of praise is due,  
Only in you my song begins and endeth’.

And what is ‘only in you’ must be new when language is found for it. If this just claim be allowed, we may admire Sidney's Stella-book without restraint, and we

quote a typical sonnet, especially notable for its fluent ease.

‘ My true-love hath my heart and I have his,  
By just exchange—one for the other given ;  
I hold his dear and mine he cannot miss,  
There never was a better bargain driven.  
His heart in me keeps me and him in one,  
My heart in him his thought and senses guides ;  
He loves my heart, for once it was his own,  
I cherish it because in me it bides.  
His heart his wound received from my sight,  
My heart was wounded with his wounded heart ;  
For as from me, on him, his hurt did light,  
So still methought, in me, his hurt did smart,  
Both equal hurt, in this change sought our bliss,  
My true love hath my heart and I have his ’.

The *Arcadia*, 1579, was a book exactly suited to Sidney's fastidious taste, and it corresponded, too, to the surroundings of his sister, Mary, Countess of Pembroke, at whose country-house he wrote it in retirement, and to whom he inscribed it. It was a pastoral romance with a practical aim. It was designed to show forth in prose the native resources of the English language as fitting speech for princes and their courtiers ; and since, as schoolmasters know, there is always a subtle connection between language and conduct, between the utterance of the lips and the manners of the man, courtiers trained to precision in speech would be likely to live on a level of romantic and noble endeavour. In other words (and this is important), if a worthy language could be invented for the new ways of commerce, conquest, and exploration, to all of which Sidney was drawn by every fibre of his adventurous being, these new ways would be consecrated to the old ideals of chivalry and honour. A like problem recurred in recent times, on a wider ring of the same concentric circle, when universities of trade and engineering were established in industrial centres, in order to stimulate and foster the old spirit under new conditions. English life in

the reign of Queen Elizabeth, as in the reign of King Edward VII, was passing into a larger sphere of use, and Sidney, following Castiglione, was a kind of schoolmaster at Court, eager to teach the new industrialism the culture of the old feudalism. At a somewhat tedious length, with conscious, selective artifice, in the deliberate manner of Montemayor and Sannazzaro, and with the interspersed lyrics which confess the origin of the prose-pastoral in poetic eclogue, Sir Philip Sidney did at least try to transport Arcadia to Tudor England, and to prove, however tentatively, that Arcady, like Heaven, lies within us.

It is difficult to establish these conclusions. The winding course of Sidney's *Arcadia* does not facilitate quotation, and the comparative methods of Sidney and his predecessors would require illustration from other Arcadies. We may remark the negative feature, to be observed, too, in Montemayor, of the absence of magic and faëry from this pastoral romance: an economy of material which obviously points to the development of the novel in the modern sense out of the romance in the old. No small part of such development was contributed by Sidney's extension of the mere story-interest in his narrative. He multiplied the number of female characters, and diversified their parts. He invented the first Pamela in English fiction, thus showing the way to Samuel Richardson, Maria Edgeworth, and later novelists. His plot, though confused and hard to follow, contained threads of real human conflict, which were utilized by the playwrights of the morrow; and he commanded resources of colour, in relief of the monotony and insipidity which oppress Bohemians in Arcadia.

As might be expected in a book written under the lee of Lord Pembroke's country-seat and in the



spacious times of Queen Elizabeth, the *Arcadia* is full of happy phrases, anticipating the Attic age of English prose—

‘It seemed that Mars had begotten him upon one of the Muses’.

‘Oppressed with being loved almost as much as with loving’.

‘The causes of their joys were far different; for as the shepherd and the butcher may both look upon one sheep with pleasing conceits, but the shepherd with mind to profit himself by preserving, the butcher with killing him’. . . .

And we may note the authentic sound of romance, long since vanished in feeble echoes through keepsakes, albums, and the like, in such a passage as the following—

‘Then the black knight, invited by the willing countenance of the princess, abasing his helmet, advanced more fearfully than to a battle, to kiss her hand, when Zelmane courteously retired Philoclea a little distance from thence, as glad to confer with her, as to give her friend occasion to confer with Pamela, who presently, whilst the roses of his lips made a flower of affection with the lilies of her hands’, . . .

It was the grand style of courtly demeanour which Sir Philip Sidney recommended to his contemporaries, and which he bore on the fatal field of Zutphen. Its intimate association with real life distinguished the purpose of *Arcadia* from novels of the *Amadis* type in Spain.

Court-romance, thus plenteously cultivated, brought an antidote in its train, and it is to Spain, again, in the first instance that we look for the low-life romances which at last drove out Court-romance.

*Lazarillo* counterbalanced *Amadis*. We first hear of little Lazarus, or Lazarillo, in 1554, when editions of the anonymous *Vida* (the Life) *de*

#### LAZARILLO DE TORMES

were published at Alcalà, Burgos, and Antwerp. The name and some of the adventures have been traced to earlier sources, and the status of rogue, or *pícaro*, whence the picaresque novel derives its epithet, was known in fiction, as we saw, to the old Archpriest of Hita and to the author of *Celestina*. But no priority in invention of detached episodes or phrases detracts from the full originality of this anonymous prose anti-romance; and, whatever the rogue's descent, he ascends through various changes, at which we shall pause in due course, from *Lazarillo de Tormes* to Le Sage, Fielding, and Dickens.

*Lazarillo* is the autobiography of a soldier of fortune, the crown of whose sordid career was his appointment as town-crier of Toledo. The fiction corresponded to reality. The *chevalier d'industrie* was a real person in the land, at the time when Sir Philip Sidney and kindred idealists were teaching the Courts of the Renaissance to adapt the old tunes to new voices. Thoughtful Spaniards, watching disabled soldiers beg their way from door to door, were beginning to count the cost and to scrutinize the fruits of empire. They were taking stock after the war; and in this mood of realism and disillusion the coat of chivalry was turned inside out. Little Lazarus and his followers wore the seamy side outwards. Like the sophists of old, they were at pains to make the worse seem the better side; and we have to await the insight of Cervantes for the true pity and humour of chivalry's decline. For all that *Lazarillo* made ugly and Sidney sought to postpone, Cervantes admitted and transfigured.

Meanwhile, rogues multiplied and prospered. The anonymous writer of *Lazarillo* was succeeded by

MATEO ALEMAN (1547-1614),

whose Part I of *Guzman de Alfarache* was issued in 1599, and Part II in 1604 (after a forged Part II by another writer). A promised third Part was never forthcoming. Aleman's 'Spanish Proteus', as Ben Jonson called Alfarache in a poem prefixed to the first English version <sup>1</sup>, was a plausible *pícaro*, who has been well described as 'a composite monster, at one time the respectable Aleman himself, at the next the embodiment of all that shocks him' <sup>2</sup>. Lesage, in his French translation, 1732, omitted the 'moralités superflues' of this quick-change, Jekyll-and-Hyde adventurer; but in Spain, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, his versatility added to his popularity. It deeply consoled every new-made *chevalier d'industrie* to cite Aleman as his authority that he was a better fellow than he seemed, as much sinned against as sinning, and a parasite for which society was to blame. It added dignity to roguery to pose as a social problem, and undoubtedly the pose promoted sales. There were twenty-six editions of *Alfarache* during the first six years, and his character was recognized as so typical that the book became known as the *Pícaro*, without reference to its particular title.

Lastly, we close our account of the expatiation of letters with a short sketch of the development of

#### DRAMA.

We noted on an earlier page the acute distinction of a Spanish critic between plays founded on knowledge (*noticia*; 'if Jonson's learned sock be on') and plays

<sup>1</sup> By James Mabbe, 1622.

<sup>2</sup> E. Warner Allen, *Celestina*.

founded on fancy (*fantasia* ; ‘ sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy’s child ’). This distinction will grow. It will lead ultimately to the difference, so glibly defined by Polonius (*Hamlet*, ii, 2), between ‘ the law of writ and the liberty ’, or the classical and the romantic stages. Writers *a noticia*, we may add, whether their knowledge was poured into elegant masques and pageants or into plays in the Latin tradition, when ‘ Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light ’, appealed directly to the patrons of court-lyric and learned wit, while writers *a fantasia* had to carve their own way by psychological insight and emotional power.

We meet this distinction on the English stage, between the plays of university wits, John Lyly and his associates, and the plays in public theatres of Christopher Marlowe and actors’ companies. And we meet it at an earlier date in the course of the Spanish Renaissance. Take the contrast, for example, between Gil Vicente and Lope de Rueda. Vicente was a Portuguese poet who died in 1557. He wrote more than forty plays, some in Castilian, some in Portuguese, and some in a dialect compounded of both. They were all what we may call Naharro<sup>1</sup> dramas : tragi-comedies or *autos*, half-lyrical and half-dramatic, part-eclogue and part-pastoral, and altogether cultivated and artistic. Lope de Rueda, on the contrary, who died about 1565, was a journeyman-promoter of the stage. His most eminent fellow-countryman, Cervantes, who was eighteen years old when Rueda died, and may well have seen him in the theatre, wrote of his performances as follows—

‘ In the time of this celebrated Spaniard, the whole apparatus of a manager was contained in a large

<sup>1</sup> See p. 198.

sack, and consisted of four white shepherd's-jackets, four beards and wigs, and four shepherd's crooks. The plays were dialogues, like eclogues, between two or three shepherds and a shepherdess, fitted up with two or three interludes, played by a negress, a bully, a fool, or a Biscayan. In all these four parts and others Rueda used to act with the utmost possible skill'.

The primitiveness of the proceedings may be judged from a direction to the spectators in Rueda's comedy *Eufemia*—

' O audience, go now and dine ! Then return to the market-place, if ye wish to see a traitor's head cut off and a just man set at liberty '.

Those for whom the play was not the thing did not return, it may be assumed, from dining.

It is well to reconstruct these surroundings, and to realize Rueda's boldness in appealing, not to religious sentiment nor to wits' appreciation of wit, but to a chance collection of the critics by whose judgment every acting drama must ultimately stand or sink—public opinion itself. He took his booth round the towns, to Segovia, Toledo, Seville, Madrid ; and, behind a blanket manipulated by a cord, he prepared dramatic effects to amuse and thrill his audiences. Rueda ranks as the founder of the popular theatre in Spain, and it is notable that Rueda's *Eufemia* was drawn from the same Boccaccian source as Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, and his *Engaños* (' Cheats ') from the same source as Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

Just such another actor-manager, though considerably later in date, was Alexandre Hardy (c. 1570-1631) in France. He is said to have written, or handled, between six and seven hundred plays, and this fecundity itself debars him from serious

consideration. Yet there is one point of view from which Hardy's name and Shakespeare's may be mentioned in the same breath. Like Rueda, they cared first for the audience. Both were practical actor-managers, more intent on making the theatre pay than on expounding a theory of poetics, and both had little Latin and less Greek. Take the question of the Unities, for example. It happened that the close of Hardy's career coincided with the critical formulation of the three Unities as rules binding the French stage. To this formulation Hardy contributed nothing. There is no sign in his hundreds of plays that he had ever heard the word Unities. Yet there is every sign that, from the actor's side of the footlights, he had acquired a working knowledge of what could and could not be done; and his practical experience proved invaluable when the theorists began to frame their rules. He saw that a single action, a seizable period of time, and a definite extension in space were essential to the stage-illusion; and he knew that incredulous audiences make unpopular plays.

And how did Hardy gain his experience? Merely (or chiefly) by the accident that his theatre had taken over the stage-properties of the old *Confrérie de la Passion* (see page 196), and that the lessor, Valleran Lecomte, had instructed Hardy, as manager, to make the most of the material, since he did not intend to scrap it. Thus, this practice which was elaborated into a theory, this delusive verisimilitude which was tortured by French Horatian critics into an exact code of dramatic Unities, was partly, at least, the necessity of an industrious hack careful of his employer's purse. The titles of his plays do not matter. They might all have been called 'As You Like It', so confidently did he cut them to the measure of his stage out of the miscellaneous material at his disposal. His ignorance



was his strength. No rules or models restrained him ; and so, despite an execrable style, he breathed new life into French drama. Mystery-play or Morality, it was all one to Hardy ; his business was to fill Le-comte's theatre ; and this exacting business he performed through thirty assiduous years. Rough and ready though his stage-craft was, he cast out the stones for his successors.

We may be excused if we pass over the successors to Hardy and Rueda. Trial-work is interesting to experts ; but the general reader is content to register the triumphs of dramatic art in the plays of the masters to be : Marlowe and Shakespeare in England ; Lope de Vega and Calderon in Spain ; Molière, Corneille, and Racine in France. One or two names only are worth recording, for the sake of their influence on future playwrights. Thus, Luigi Pasqualigo, an Italian, wrote a prose-comedy, *Il Fidele*, which Pierre Larivey rendered into French (*La Fidelle*) and Anthony Munday into English (*The Comedy of Two Italian Gentlemen*). All that is best in it is extant in Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Thus, Robert Garnier, a Frenchman, wrote Greek and Roman tragedies, taken, like Shakespeare's, from Plutarch's *Lives*. Mary, Countess of Pembroke rendered his *Mark Antony* into English blank verse, and he anticipated the greater French dramatists by employing the Alexandrine metre for his plays. Thus, too, Etienne Jodelle, a star of the Pleiad, as we saw, laid the foundation in France alike of tragedy and comedy. We must leave to specialists the task of assessing the debt of Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* to Jodelle's *Cléopâtre*. Thus, too, Juan dela Cueva wrote a Spanish play, *Infamador* ('The Slanderer'), which invented the type of comedy known as *de Capa y Espada*, or of Cloak and Sword, associated in the great age with the plays of Lope de Vega.

Further, he introduced the character of the typical libertine, later fashionable in Spain and England as Don Juan.

So we pass through the straits to the stream. The apprentices' work is done. The musings of Petrarch in his library have informed the culture of Western Europe, and the master-mariners of the literary Renaissance set their course by the light of the Seven Stars. These lights were chiefly reflected at the Courts of Renaissance princes, whose patronage, flattered by Ariosto, anatomized by Machiavelli, and idealized by Castiglione, was felt always in varying degrees as 'a presence which is not to be put by'.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### The Maturity of Romance.

WE arrange in order of birth the names of eight great writers who adorned the literary Renaissance at the close of the sixteenth and the opening of the seventeenth century—

BORN.	COUNTRY.		BORN.	COUNTRY.	
1544	Italy	TASSO	1562	Spain	LOPE DE VEGA
1547	Spain	CERVANTES	1564	England	MARLOWE
1552	England	SPENSER	1564	England	SHAKESPEARE
1561	England	BACON	1600	Spain	CALDERON

The first, Tasso, the Italian, represents the last stage of the long movement towards perfection in epic romance, which began with Chrétien de Troyes, and in which the works of Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto are milestones on the way.

Of the seven others, four are English and three are Spanish, representing fairly enough the two countries whose trial of strength for maritime supremacy was decided in 1588.

The list is far from exhaustive. We postpone to the next chapter a group of writers in the Netherlands, whose Dutch and Latin works caught the contagion of Renaissance ideals, and contributed something to John Milton. We omit Giordano Bruno (born 1548), whose transcendent genius was primarily scientific; and we leave till the centuries of Reason the tale of the new French school, commencing with François de Malherbe (born 1555), which led thought away from the romantics and crowned it with the noble eloquence of Descartes (1596), Corneille (1606), Molière (1622), Racine (1639), and their followers at home and

abroad. Meanwhile, the eight writers enumerated may be considered in one chapter. They might all have been met in one lifetime. A young man of eighteen who read Tasso's 'Jerusalem Delivered' might have handled Calderon's plays before he was seventy years of age. No half-century since writing was invented has ever contained so many masterpieces.

The record of

### TORQUATO TASSO,

who died at the age of fifty-one, is so thickly encrusted with romance, that there is a risk of neglecting what he wrote for the sake of what others have written about him. Thus, Goethe, drawing on his own experience as Court-poet to a princely patron, made a drama *Torquato Tasso*, 1788. Yet Goethe's experience at Weimar was but the palest reflection of Tasso's at Ferrara. Ariosto, a few years earlier, had contrived to be gay in his cage, and to please the d'Este of his day. But Ariosto had been content to sing of Count Roland in love; Tasso was poised for higher flight <sup>1</sup>. The love he sang was his own for the languishing Princess Leonora, sister to Alfonso d'Este, the reigning Duke; and he chose his epic material from recent annals of the Church militant. But all his surroundings were distracting and unreal. Leonora was too near for abstract sentiment, too royally aloof for human love. Alfonso's Court was a nest of intrigue, like Frederick the Great's at

<sup>1</sup> A poet's comment on the two poets is interesting and curious. Shelley, staying at Ferrara in 1818, wrote of the handwriting of both, that Ariosto's 'is a small, firm and pointed character, expressing, as I should say, a strong and keen, but circumscribed energy of mind; that of Tasso is large, free and flowing, except that there is a checked expression in the midst of its flow. It is the symbol of an intense and earnest mind, exceeding at times its own depth, and admonished to return by the chilliness of the waters of oblivion striking upon its adventurous feet'.

Potsdam, and Tasso, unlike Voltaire, was quite ill at ease in such an atmosphere. The Duke's chief concern with a tame poet was to make sure of the dedication of a great Renaissance poem to himself. This was his right as a Renaissance prince, and when the poet showed signs of restiveness, the prince was pleased to clip his wings. Seven miserable years (1579-86) Tasso spent in an alienist prison ; and, in the presence of this major terror, we need not pause to particularize Leonora's fitful unkindness, the suspicious criticism of the Church, the cabals of spiteful academicians (Salviati of the Dellacruscans among them), and the jealousies of rival poets. To all these Tasso was over-sensitive. Together, they broke his fine spirit.

We turn from the singer to the songs. Tasso belongs, like Shelley, to the poets who are musicians too, and we are told on competent authority that 'inventors of opera recognized Tasso's genius and profited by his ideas on poetry and music, and their union in drama' <sup>1</sup>. This profitable union was effected in the pastoral *Aminta*, 1573, Tasso's Arcadian romance, which was closely followed in time and manner by the *Pastor Fido* of Giambattista Guarini (1537-1612), his constant and conscious rival. It is the *Pastor Fido* rather than the *Aminta* which proved in succeeding years the fruitful source of sylvan fables in Italy itself, in Spain and in Portugal. But the vogue, as we have noted, fell out of favour : possibly for the prosaic cause that railways opened up the countryside ; and neither work, despite its lyric beauties, is much consulted to-day. Tasso's early epical *Rinaldo*, his frigid tragedy, *Torrismondo*, and his blank-verse poem on the Creation (du Bartas' subject, we remember) may also be passed over. It is as author of *Gerusalemme*

<sup>1</sup> Romain Rolland, *Musiciens d'Autrefois*.

*Liberata* that Tasso won immortal fame, and found his way into every language <sup>1</sup>, including Arabic and Chinese. Its rarely beautiful stanzas, the octaves of Boiardo and Ariosto, move with a stately smoothness unmatched even in Italian verse; and, while judges as impeccable as Milton have admired the art of the poem, its tales are said to have been chanted by peasants in their homes and by galley-slaves at their oars.

And what was the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, the Christian *Iliad*, as Tasso would have us call it? Briefly, the romance is hewn from the old *chansons de geste* of Antioch and Jerusalem—

‘The sacred armies and the godly knight  
That the great sepulchre of Christ did free  
I sing. Much wrought his valour and foresight,  
And in that glorious war much suffered he.  
In vain ’gainst him did Hell oppose her might,  
In vain the Turks and Morians armed be.  
His soldiers wild, to brawls and mutines prest,  
Reduced he to peace; so Heaven him blest.

‘O heavenly Muse, that not with fading bays  
Deckest thy brow by th’ Heliconian spring,  
But sittest, crown’d with stars’ immortal rays,  
In Heaven, where legions of bright angels sing,  
Inspire life in my wit, my thoughts upraise,  
My verse ennoble, and forgive the thing,  
If fiction light I mix with truth divine,  
And fill these lines with others’ praise than thine’.

So, in this epic of the First Crusade, historical and fictitious characters, with Godfrey of Boulogne (Bouillon) at their head, are combined in varied adventures of love, war, magic, and crusaders’ zeal. There is much which the twentieth century ascribes to defective taste in the sixteenth. The invention of Rinaldo d’Este, as ancestor of the Duke of Ferrara, among the heroes of the Crusade, and his investiture with the highest qualities of youth, and beauty, and

<sup>1</sup> Into English by Edward Fairfax (died 1635), whose version is utilized here.



daring, are compliments to Alfonso d'Este which have lost their savour to-day. Tasso's battle-scenes are sometimes too Virgilian (how closely his opening verse recalls *Arma virumque cano*); but how should an Italian epicist not Virgilize when Molza was translating the *Aeneid*? His sacred scenes are in places a little heavy; but the hand of ecclesiasticism, as we have seen, was a real terror in Tasso's day, and authority had to be conciliated. None of these criticisms affects the surprising wonder of the poem, with its streaming succession of episodes and images, subdued to artistic expression, and enhanced by emotional appeal.

Take the funeral of a Christian knight—

' We need not mourn for thee here laid to rest ;  
Earth is thy bed, and not thy grave ; the skies  
Are for thy soul the cradle and the nest ;  
There live, for here thy glory never dies.  
For like a Christian knight and champion blest  
Thou didst both live and die ; now feed thine eyes  
With thy Redeemer's sight, where, crowned with bliss,  
Thy faith, zeal, merit, well deserving is '.

Take the enchanted forest—

' O hardy Knight ! who through these woods hast passed,  
Where Death his palace and his court doth hold,  
O trouble not these souls in quiet placed,  
O be not cruel as thy heart is bold !  
Pardon these ghosts deprived of heavenly light ;  
With spirits dead why should men living fight ? '

Take the stanzas rendered by Spenser in Book II of the *Faerie Queene*, renewing once more the spell of the half-human rose of the Renaissance, which we plucked with Ronsard in the last chapter—

' The whiles some one did chaunt this lovely lay :—  
" Ah ! see, whoso fair thing dost fain to see,  
In springing flower the image of thy day.  
Ah ! see, the Virgin Rose, how sweetly she  
Doth first peep forth with bashful modestie,  
That fairer seems the less ye see her may.  
Lo ! see soon after how more bold and free  
Her bared bosom she doth broad display ;  
Lo ! see soon after how she fades and falls away.

“ So passeth, in the passing of a day,  
 Of mortal life the leaf, the bud, the flower ;  
 Ne more doth flourish after first decay,  
 That erst was sought to deck both bed and bower  
 Of many a ladye and many a paramour.  
 Gather therefore the Rose, whiles yet is prime,  
 For soon comes age that will her pride deflower ;  
 Gather the Rose of Love whiles yet is time,  
 Whiles loving thou mayst loved be with equal erime ”<sup>1</sup>.

This is the essential Tasso. This is he of whom Voltaire said that ‘it is astonishing how Tasso impresses a new character upon the soft Italian tongue, enhancing it by majesty, and informing it with strength’. This is he of whom Goethe wrote, that

‘ ’Twas thou alone who from a life of limits  
 Didst raise me to a splendid liberty ;  
 Who tookest from my shoulders every load,  
 And gav’st me freedom, that my soul might grow  
 And spend itself in undistracted song ;  
 Aye, all the merit that my labour earns  
 Is due to thee, and thine be all my thanks ’.

Till William Watson wrote of William Wordsworth, ‘This voice sang me free’, no nobler tribute is on record in the enchiridion of poets’ praise.

There were three versions of *Gerusalemme Liberata*: the first in 1576, published without Tasso’s consent ; the authorized edition of 1581 ; and a revised edition in 1593, when the poet was released from confinement. Therein, among other alterations, all, or nearly all, for the worse, Rinaldo d’Este was sacrificed to Tasso’s resentment against Alfonso, and the dedication to the Duke disappeared. As a mark of distinction, the epic was re-entitled ‘Jerusalem Conquered’. But this product of disappointment is forgotten. The glowing poem of 1581 prevails, and in this, whatever its faults, Tasso ‘proved himself the first genuinely sentimental artist of the modern age’<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Symonds, *op. cit.*

The passage from Tasso to

EDMUND SPENSER,

who died in 1599, is marked by the altar of incense which the younger poet raised to the elder. Even in Tasso's lifetime Spenser had anticipated the poet's poets who were to swell the chorus of his praises. As early as 1589, while Tasso was languishing in prison, Spenser wrote a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, in which he 'expounded his whole intention in' the *Faerie Queene*, and portions of the three books then written, out of the twelve in contemplation, were rendered more or less literally (indeed, rather more than less) from Cantos 15 and 16 of Tasso's epic-romance.

This likeness makes quotation less necessary for the illustration of Spenser's gifts. His generous debt to Tasso, who thus passed into the heritage of Northern poets, does not exhaust the tale of Spenser's Continental discipline. To the immense benefit of English letters, he possessed what is called a receptive mind. Italian poets, such as Mantuan and Guarini, had revived from Sicily and Rome (Theocritus and Virgil in antiquity) the verse-pastoral known as the eclogue, and Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* was a book of eclogues in this tradition<sup>1</sup>. The French poets of the Pleiad had practised new lyrical measures, imported from Italy to correct the native medieval resources, and Spenser's odes and sonnets and direct translations from du Bellay proved as valuable a training, when he turned from eager acquisition to noble contemplation and invention as Chaucer's apprenticeship to the *Roman de la Rose*. Even his lot in

<sup>1</sup> That Sir Philip Sidney objected to its language as too realistic for Sannazzaro's standard is no longer to be regarded as a serious point of adverse criticism. See p. 137.

life had analogies in the lives of brother-poets. He suffered, as Ariosto had suffered, from a term of exile in an uncongenial administration. Spenser's Garfagnana was Ireland. He suffered, as Tasso had suffered, from the pedantic criticism of academicians. Spenser's Della Crusca was the Areopagus, his Salviati was Gabriel Harvey. He suffered, as both had suffered, from the fickleness of a royal patron. But he differed from Tasso and Ariosto in his finer courage under adversity. Neither his Christianity nor his Platonism was external. He met disappointment and disaster more evenly and tranquilly than they, and the two parts of Renaissance philosophy were fused in a truer harmony than any 'Christian Homer' had achieved. A Puritan fibre strengthened the winding melodies of his style; a fastidious taste preserved it from arid stretches of theology.

The *Faerie Queene*, like the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, is essentially a beautiful poem, and Spenser was freer than Tasso from the advice of well-meaning friends as to the relations of beauty and truth. He was content to trust his own judgment, and to fix an independent ratio between the story and the moral. For his story Spenser went, not to Tasso's cycle of the Orient, nor to Ariosto's cycle of Charlemagne, but to the third of the three great 'matières à nul homme entendant', that of Bretagne, or the Arthuriad. And his moral was clear from the start. He sought to 'pourtrait in Arthur' (we are still quoting Spenser's letter to Raleigh) 'the image of a brave knight, perfected in the xii private moral virtues, as Aristotle hath devised'. An admirable and a worthy ambition. But we do not read the *Faerie Queene*, perhaps Spenser never seriously meant us to, for the sake of Aristotle or Arthur. Of the twelve books thus designed, three were ready in 1589, three more in 1595, and the rest were either lost at sea or, more

probably, never written <sup>1</sup>. To readers in the twentieth century, missing the second half of the poem, the style counts for more than the story and the story for more than the moral. Not to take the measure of a gentleman, complete in six virtues out of twelve, but to ride through dreamland and wonderland with perfect knights and ladies fair; not for 'the general end' of the *Faerie Queene*, which, like that of the *Cortegiano*, was 'to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline' (such a gentleman as Sir Philip Sidney), but for particular passages of music, which flow with languorous delight through the long, enthralling stanzas, poets and lovers of poetry return to England's 'poets' poet' to-day. Those stanzas haunt us with their beauty. Spenser's stanza departed from rhyme-royal (Chaucer's measure, which he carefully studied) and from the Italian *ottava-rima*, handed on from Boccaccio to Tasso, by its addition of a ninth line, an Alexandrine. We quote the opening stanza of the poem—

' A gentle knight was pricking on the plain,	a
Y-clad in mighty arms and silver shield	b
Wherein old dints of deep wounds did remain,	a
The cruel marks of many a bloody field ;	b
Yet arms till that time did he never wield.	b
His angry steed did chide his foaming bit,	c
As much disdaining to the curb to yield :	b
Full jolly knight he seemed, and fair did sit,	c
As one for knightly jousts and fierce encounters fit'.	c

Note, first, that the nine lines have but three rhymes, *a*, *b*, and *c* ; that the octave, or stanza in eight verses (the longer portion of a sonnet), is a *canzone*, or lyrical measure, descended direct from Troubadour love-song ; and that the concluding *c*-rhyme verse in twelve syllables, which Spenser invented for his stanza, stamped the octave with a new character, and

<sup>1</sup> Except 'Two Cantos of Mutabilitie', forming Book vii, Cantos 6 and 7.

gave it that winding melody, that embracing and insinuating charm, which Keats, for instance, found so irresistible. The Spenserian stanza is an original metre, and later prosodists and poets have not been niggardly in gratitude. Note, too, the resources of Spenser's art: the unobtrusive alliteration in 'pricking . . . plain', 'silver shield', 'dints . . . deep', 'marks . . . many', etc., signs of progress obviously due to Ronsard's and du Bellay's teachings; the simple, appropriate epithets, with no straining after effect or aureation, in 'gentle', 'mighty', 'old', 'deep', 'cruel', 'foaming', 'fierce'; the round English diction of the words 'pricking', 'dints', 'bloody', 'jolly', so far removed from pretentious Latinisms; and, lastly, the flow of the verses, with 'arms' picking up 'arms', 'knight' 'knight', and the rhyme-sounds in their places. Great poetry cannot be resolved into its elements of beauty, but Spenser's repays analysis.

We reach two great contemporaries, who divide the primacy of the Renaissance—Miguel de Cervantes in Spain and William Shakespeare in England. Others are comparatively great, and may be measured one by another; Sidney by Ronsard, Spenser by Tasso, and so forth. For these two there is no standard of comparison. Their masterworks, deeply founded on all the literature below them, stand aloft and supreme. They died within a fortnight of each other, in the poets' April, 1616. But, unlike Boccaccio and Chaucer, equal contemporaries of an earlier epoch, they never met in their lifetime. How should they meet in this world of fixed values, where the one was Catholic and a Spaniard, the other Protestant and an Englishman, and their countries were at war? Yet, in a mystic sense, appropriate to the Platonism of their age, their spirits met day by



day on the heights of insight and achievement, whence they passed to the Elysian plains.

Macaulay tells us of the golden age of Spain, that 'almost every distinguished writer was also distinguished as a soldier or a politician'. The mortal life of

#### MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA <sup>1</sup>

was adventurous even by this reckoning. Educated in Madrid and Salamanca, the fourth of a physician's seven children, he had to make his own way, and life itself was his school and university. His identity seems to be established with the Miguel de Cervantes who was sentenced in 1569 to ten years' exile and amputation of his left hand. At any rate, he left Spain in that year, and came back to it *minus* his left hand. He had lost it in the Battle of the Gulf of Lepanto, after serving a while as a private soldier, and he had fought at Navarino and Tunis. He was home-bound from Naples in 1575, when his galley was captured by pirates, and Cervantes was deported to Algiers, 'in those days a polite name for hell'. The record of his patience in captivity, and of his noble aid to his fellow-prisoners must be sought elsewhere; the preface to his 'Tales' is one authority. In 1580, at the end of the ten years, he returned to Spain.

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted in this section to Mr. Robinson Smith's *Don Quixote* (2nd edit., Routledge, 1914) with a *Life of Cervantes*. Quotations not otherwise designated are taken from his book, and I know that so true a Cervantista will accept this general acknowledgment. Hallam's estimate of *Don Quixote* may here be cited: 'It is to Europe in general what Ariosto is to Italy and Shakespeare to England; the one book to which the slightest allusions may be made without affectation, but not missed without discredit' (iii, p. 155). Similarly, Ticknor wrote: 'Cervantes has shown himself as kindred to all times and all lands, and has thus, beyond all other writers, received in return a tribute of sympathy and admiration from the universal spirit of humanity' (iii, p. 147). The tercentenary of the death of Cervantes, 1916, though it occurred in the midst of the Great War, was the occasion of some excellent monographs, including a British Academy paper by Prof. J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, and stimulated Spanish studies in this country.

His difficulties were not at an end, and he found ample cause to make use of the lessons learned in adversity abroad. He depended for a precarious livelihood partly on literary work of a miscellaneous character, partly on a deputy-collectorship in the Department of Naval Stores. Unlike Wordsworth's similar appointment, Cervantes' was far from a sinecure. More than once the deputy-collector had to spend a few nights in gaol, while his superior officer tried to compose his accounts. Nor was the work of gathering taxes for the King's Navy made easier or more cheerful by the loss of the Spanish Armada; and a long record of petty misery is broken by only one bright event, the happy marriage of Cervantes on December 12, 1584, to Catalina de Salazar de Palacios. So the lean years went by, till, at last, at Valladolid, 'in calle del Rastro, on the first floor, in the year 1603, and at the rate of a chapter or two a week, with but the stump of a left hand to hold down the leaves of his note-book, this middle-aged, silver-bearded, weather-beaten soldier and collector wrote the first part of *Don Quixote*, and made himself immortal'.

He was not quite unknown as an author. They all wrote pastorals in those days, and Cervantes had written *Galatea*. They all wrote plays in those days, and it is said that, in 1592, Cervantes contracted at Seville to supply the manager of a theatre with six comedies at thirty ducats each. The fate of this contract is not stated, but Cervantes had written *Numancia*, a play dealing with Scipio Africanus, which Goethe and Shelley praised for its metrical skill and Fichte for its patriotic sentiment. Better witnesses could not be cited.

What was the motive of *Don Quixote*? How and why did the central idea occur to the 'middle-aged soldier and collector', and what does *Don Quixote* mean, when its fun and humour are exhausted?

The book is sometimes represented as a mere travesty of the chivalric romances, which had obtained in that age a firm hold on the affection and imagination of the reading public. So firm and so dangerous withal, like picture-palace shows in our own day, that the State was impelled to interfere, and the paternal Emperor-King Charles V forbade the exportation to his subjects overseas of *Amadis* and *Palmerin* stories. At home, too, it was time to take stock. It was time to put off the shining armour, and to face the realities of life. Cervantes, according to this view, sat down in the calle del Rastro and deliberately set to work to make the knightly type of character ridiculous. His ugly duties as tax-collector had no doubt made him familiar with the revulsion of public feeling consequent on the defeat of the Armada. The Spanish Empire, founded on chivalry, was beginning to be assessed by the taxpayers, and Don Quixote certainly played his part as a survivor from the old time into the new. In this sense, Cervantes in Spain was the antitype to Sir Walter Scott in Britain. Scott's function was to revive the spell of chivalric history in the minds and hearts of his fellow-countrymen. Cervantes' was precisely the reverse. He sought to justify to Spain the breach with her heroic past, and to estop, as he succeeded in doing, the flood of feigned ardour and fictitious sentiment.

We can cite text and verse for this view. Don Quixote was bemused with romance—

‘ In a word this respected gentleman passed his nights from twilight to dawn and his days from dawn to twilight entangled in his books, till from little rest and much reading he muddled his wits, which were filled with the fantasy of all that he had read, whether of enchantments, broils, battles,

challenges, wounds, wooings, amours, hurricanes, or of other the wildest absurdities ' <sup>1</sup>.

But this is far from the whole of Cervantes' motive. It is merely a negative aspect of his deeply imaginative romance. On *Don Quixote's* positive side, Cervantes propounds, even more clearly than Rabelais, a new philosophy of life. It was easy enough to be anti-chivalrous. The rogue-heroes and pot-house bullies of Spanish picaresque novelists had proved that adventure is to the crafty and success to the unscrupulous. But 'the famous history of the errant knight' was not merely a warning, but an inspiration. It was a call to conduct as well as to negation. The proof of this is more difficult, since it is contained in all the history of *Don Quixote de la Mancha* and his squire, Sancho Panza. Quixote's heroic temper emerged unscathed from trial and tribulation. Though all which he attempted failed, though all which he imagined proved vain, though he was but a poor, mad visionary in a generation of positivists and opportunists, he preserved a higher reason and a nobler sanity than they. He helped to evoke that 'imaginative reason', which, as we read in Matthew Arnold <sup>2</sup>, is 'the main element of the modern spirit's life'. *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, and *Chichikov* are essential to the understanding of that life, and among the spiritual fathers, who most assisted the transition from the old idealism to the new, Cervantes in Spain, Lesage in France, and Gogol in Russia claim supremacy. The pure, brave heart of *Don Quixote*, his humility, his purpose, his humanity, survived the ruin of his world, and built the new world on the old. Hence the universal acceptance of his wisdom, the penetration of our soul with his teaching. We are all apt to tilt

<sup>1</sup> *Don Quixote*, i, 1.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 238 above.

at windmills, to mistake an inn for a castle, and natural phenomena for enchanters' magic. By such mistakes progress is made. We all go better armed with the sure shield, persisting through disillusion and disappointment, which Quixote fashioned out of his ideals, and never a philosopher or dramatist has wrought more for humankind than Cervantes.

Lastly, the construction of *Don Quixote*. It is sown almost too abundantly with references to the chivalric romances, and these are rendered absurd by their incongruity with the facts. One example will typify many. In Book I, Chapter 25, Quixote, admitting that he is mad, resolves to pursue Dulcinea in the manner of Count Roland: 'the knight-errant imitating him most closely will be surest of reaching perfection'. So he wills to

'play the victim of, despair, the wild, the furious lover, like the worthy Roland, what time he discovered at the spring the marks that compromised Angelica the Fair with Medoro. His grief addled his wits, and in his frenzy he uprooted trees, soiled brooks, slew shepherds, destroyed their flocks, burned their huts, levelled houses, dragged mares after him, and worked a hundred thousand other infamies worthy of record and eternal fame'.

Squire Sancho ventures to object that the occasion is lacking for so conscientious a personation of *Orlando Furioso*. 'What marks have *you* found', he asks, 'which lead you to think that Lady Dulcinea del Toboso has been trifling with Moor or Christian?' But Don Quixote's answer is ready—

'Just there lies the beauty of it, for no thanks or value attaches to a knight when actually driven to insanity. The thing is to go mad of myself, making my lady wonder, if so I act when dry, what

will I do when drenched. So, friend Sancho, do not waste time in vainly persuading me to abandon so singular, lucky, and unheard-of an imitation as I am about to observe '.

In an age when the romances were so familiar that nearly every reference was recognized, this method told with immense effect. More than a hundred and thirty writers were laid under contribution by Cervantes, even outside Chapter 6 of Book I, where the famous bonfire of the romantics occurs; and 'there are no doubt scores of hits', we are assured, 'which still remain to be noted'. Ariosto, Aleman, and the *Amadis* tales seem to have provided most material, but Cervantes' range of reading was remarkable, and still more so was his feat of memory. Most marvellous of all was the transmutation. This happy hunting-ground of scholars, this mosaic of romantic antiquaries, was transformed by the genius of Cervantes into the grandest story-book for men and boys which has ever, so far, been written. Who recks the source of an adventure in *Orlando Furioso* or elsewhere? How many who admire a quixotic act seek the act of chivalry which inspired it? This book, of which a Second Part, even more universal in its appeal, was issued in 1615 (a forged Part ii had preceded it, in conformity with the manners of the times), may be not improperly described as the greatest single work in modern literature. Cervantes lived to publish other books, *Exemplary Tales*, *A Voyage to Parnassus*, *Comedies and Interludes*, etc., which would have made the reputation of a lesser man. To *Don Quixote* they came as an anti-climax, and he lives by the glory of *Don Quixote*. 'With one foot in the stirrup', as he wrote, adapting the words of an old play to the still older joust with death, he put the last touches to his last tale on April 19, 1616.



Four days afterwards he died. His wife died a few years later; 'but no one knows where they lie. Spain had nothing to give, not even the vain honours of the grave, to her greatest son' <sup>1</sup>.

We pass from Cervantes to

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,

the greatest English man of letters, and the chief light of the Renaissance in Europe. Shakespeare, says a German critic, 'was the first who displayed energetically the modern spirit of worldly knowledge, which is the direct converse of the spirit of the Middle Ages' <sup>2</sup>. Who was first in this energy is immaterial. Worldly knowledge, we remember, is Humanism, and the original impulse came from Petrarch, when he toiled up the sides of steep hills to explore the dust of monastic libraries. But whoever was first in time, Shakespeare was first in achievement. He displayed—the epithet is just—he displayed the new spirit most effectively. For what was the object of Renaissance writers, if a common object may be affirmed of aims starting from many different points? To equip medieval mankind with the intellectual, moral, and social gifts appropriate to the new worlds of the Humanists, the Reformers, and the Discoverers. Their dominant note was educational. They all had something to teach. In one grade, they wrote dictionaries and grammars; in another, curricula of studies; in yet another, grammars of conduct. Castiglione's *Cortegiano* was such a grammar. Montaigne's *Essais* were another. More's *Utopia* was another. Rabelais' *Gargantua* was another, though it taught by exceptions, not by rules. Erasmus was 'the educator of Europe'. Spenser's *Faerie Queene* was directed 'to fashion a gentleman in virtuous

<sup>1</sup> *Cervantes*, by Mrs. Oliphant; a charming little book.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Eduard Vehse. I have mislaid the exact reference.

discipline'. They were grammarians all, testing conduct by experience—

‘ All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels ; . . .  
He’s for the morning ’.

We need not rehearse the disabilities. We have seen how heavy a penalty was exacted for however small a departure from consecrated formulas of opinion; how books and writers of books were burned by the authority which they offended. Our debt to these martyrs of knowledge can never be rated too highly. We owe to the martyrs of the Renaissance free speech, free government, free hope. But in Shakespeare we meet a Renaissance writer who was not merely free from persecution, but who enjoyed his immunity without dependence on a prince. He was not a Court official, like Ariosto, nor a victim of Court intrigues, like Torquato Tasso. He was not raised to high place, like Sir Thomas More, nor born to it, like Sir Philip Sidney. He was a playwright in the age of Queen Elizabeth; an English Hardy<sup>1</sup>, dowered with genius instead of talent. He was always free to go his own way, from the pleasant upland pastures of Warwickshire to the theatres and taverns of London, and home again, when he had rung the curtain down, to the civic neighbourliness of Stratford-on-Avon.

Thus, Shakespeare’s opportunity was unique. He completed what others had begun, and arrived where others had shown the way. Amyot had translated Plutarch’s *Lives*, Guevara had written of *Ten Emperors*; Shakespeare put Rome on the stage. Montaigne had discoursed on *que sçais-je?*; Hamlet personated doubt. The jurists had discussed kingly power; King Lear showed forth its vanity. Shakespeare used the theatre as a medium for the expression

<sup>1</sup> See p. 305 above.

of individual consciousness. His characters, properly considered, will be found to work out their own fate, unassisted by the State and undistracted by the Church. Machiavelli might prop up his prince with all the mechanism of statecraft ; Shakespeare left him bare. The whole philosophy of the Renaissance is contained in Hamlet's perception, which we have quoted before—

‘ What a piece of work is a man ! how noble in reason ! how infinite in faculty ! in form and moving how express and admirable ! in action how like an angel ! in apprehension how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals ! ’

This was not the medieval point of view. It was, indeed, the precise contrary. Nobility, infinitude, angelicness, divinity, beauty, perfection—these were recommended in the Middle Ages as the attributes, not of man, but of God, to whose greater glory the medieval *homunculus* subdued the promptings of human reason and the instincts of his animal nature. Feudal manners, trained by the Church, had fostered this illusion, which the mirror of literature reflected. Then came worldly knowledge, or Humanism, and slowly, painfully, the illusion faded. The Renaissance man, especially the Elizabethan man, gave the reins to his natural appetites, and followed them to their inevitable sequel. Rabelais' oracle of *Tring* may be taken as the symbol of his escape. Quixote's illusion deluded himself only. English sea-dogs, home from the Spanish chase, knew the relations of character to action, and before the clean breath of their real experience the *a priori* principles of pedants and the figments of authority fled away.

Here is the clue to Shakespeare's secret. He enfranchised the reason of man, from Caliban's undeveloped mutterings to the subtlest utterance of

Wolsey or Mark Antony. He transformed medieval woman from Dante's Madonna-like Beatrice or Tasso's languishing Leonora to quick types of living femininity; Dame Quickly up to Cleopatra. He mixed high and low on his stage, and shifted his times and places, with the practical manager's contempt for the rules of Aristotle and his commentators. The theatre has spoilt our taste to-day. Playgoers, fascinated by the rendering of Shakespearean parts by favourite actors of the hour, from David Garrick to Sir Henry Irving among the dead, seldom give a thought to Shakespeare, working in Elizabethan London, with his schoolboy's knowledge of French and Latin, and his passing acquaintance with Italian. We are overwhelmed, too, by Shakespeare's bibliography. A library of volumes has been written on Shakespeare's debt to his predecessors, Shakespeare's sources, and so forth. We have noted even in this brief record occasional obvious obligations to tales by Italian novelists or North's version of Amyot's Plutarch. How else was Shakespeare to acquire the plots which his plays located in Rome, Venice, or Verona? Whence but from Raphael Holinshed, whose *Chronicles* were published in 1578, was he to seek the requisite background for his English historical plays? So Tennyson went to Malory for the *Idylls of the King* and to Sir Walter Raleigh for *The Revenge*. Yet, when every one of Shakespeare's dramas has been analysed down to its last grain of pre-Shakespearean ingredients, Shakespeare's method is still unexplored.

Take the signal example of *Hamlet*. The earliest source-book of the drama is the *Danica Historia*, written in the twelfth century by Saxo. Next, so far as we know, comes Book V of the *Histoires Tragiques* by François de Belleforest, 1571. This contained a 'Tragic Tale' from Saxo of Amleth's slaughterous career. Next, in 1586, a troop of

English actors went to Helsingör (Elsinore) in Denmark. and brought home some local colour from that Court—

‘ What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,  
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff  
That beetles o’er his base into the sea ’.

Next, Thomas Kyd, an English playwright, turned this varied material to effective use in a Hamlet-drama now not extant. It is judged by contemporary references and by the same author’s extant *Spanish Tragedy* to have been what the critics call Senecan : gory and harrowing, that is to say, after the manner of Seneca, the Latin dramatist. A stock Senecan character was a ghost, and Kyd’s *Hamlet* included the Ghost’s part,

‘ which cried so miserably at the Theatre, like an oyster-wife—“ Hamlet, revenge ! ” ’ <sup>1</sup>

Saxo, Belleforest, Kyd : but we are still a long way from Shakespeare. We may admit that Kyd is ‘ justly credited with the first invention of a play of Hamlet on the tragic lines which Shakespeare’s genius expanded and subtilized ’ <sup>2</sup>. We may even admit that Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* ‘ is a fusion, with the intermediate stages in the process still partly recognizable, of the inventive dramatic craftsmanship of Thomas Kyd and the majestic imagination, penetrating psychology, and rich verbal music of William Shakespeare ’ <sup>3</sup>. For, admitting so much, we admit all. Shakespeare’s method with his sources was to make living plays of bookish plots—

‘ But that I am forbid  
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,  
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,  
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,

<sup>1</sup> This fragment is preserved by Thomas Lodge, another minor Elizabethan, in a pamphlet, *Wit’s Misery*, 1596.

<sup>2</sup> Sir S. Lee, *Life of William Shakespeare*, 1915.

<sup>3</sup> F. S. Boas, *The Works of Thomas Kyd*.

Thy knotted and combined locks to part,  
 And each particular hair to stand on end,  
 Like quills upon the fretful porcupine ;  
 But this eternal blazon must not be  
 To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O list !  
 If thou didst ever thy dear father love—  
 Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder '.

It was not merely this 'rich verbal music' which created Act i, Scene 5, out of the catchword 'Hamlet, revenge !' It was the imagination to live in Hamlet's mind, the psychology to penetrate his motives, and the power to represent their effects, which lifts the *Hamlet* of Shakespeare so immeasurably high above Kyd, Belleforest, and Saxo ; which lifts every play of Shakespeare above the foundations on which it rests. The genius swaying these powers gave Shakespeare supremacy in the Renaissance. 'Hamlet, revenge !' cried the Ghost in Kyd's forgotten play. But the characters of Shakespeare's dramatic art were not left at the mercy of Seneca's wooden stage-directions. They revealed the hidden depths of a human soul—

'How all occasions do inform against me,  
 And spur my dull revenge ! What is a man,  
 If his chief good and market of his time  
 Be but to sleep and feed ? a beast, no more.  
 Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,  
 Looking before and after, gave us not  
 That capability and god-like reason  
 To fust in us unused '.

And again, when Hamlet is dying—

'Had I but time—as this fell sergent, death,  
 Is strict in his arrest—O, I could tell you—  
 But let it be '.

And, again—

'O good Horatio, what a wounded name,  
 Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me.  
 If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
 Absent thee from felicity awhile,  
 And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,  
 To tell my story '.

And, lastly—

'The rest is silence '.



These partial hints from a single play must suffice, in the plenitude of Shakespeare's fame, to indicate his place in European literature. We shall have to come back in a later sketch to certain aspects of his influence on future centuries. Meanwhile, it is not necessary to particularize his writings. He had his Italian period, reflected, as we saw, through the Pleiad, of half-real, half-assumed love-lyric. He had his attachment to Ovid, with issue in sensuous poems on *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. He had his Euphuistic leanings, and his quick sense of what was worthy in that style. He made a national measure of the experimental blank-verse of his predecessors. He introduced little songs into his plays, which touch the very heart of lyric. He commanded the whole range of emotions in every character from king to clown. And, when all these hints are expanded by a study of Shakespeare's works into an appreciation of his mind and art, we are still but beginners in Shakespeare-knowledge. 'After God', it has been reverently said, 'Shakespeare has created most'. Sir Sidney Lee, his best biographer, writes more soberly but not with less devotion—

'If Shakespeare's mind came in contact in an alehouse with a burly, good-humoured toper, the conception of a Falstaff found instantaneous admission to his brain. The character had revealed itself to him in most of its involutions, as quickly as his eye caught sight of its external form, and his ear caught the sound of the voice. Books offered Shakespeare the same opportunity of realizing human life and experience. A hurried perusal of an Italian story of a Jew in Venice conveyed to him the mental picture of Shylock, with all his racial temperament in energetic action, and all the background of Venetian scenery and

society accurately defined. A few hours spent over Plutarch's 'Lives' brought into being in Shakespeare's brain the true aspects of Roman character and Roman inspiration. Whencesoever the external impressions came, whether from the world of books or the world of living men, the same mental process was at work, the same visualizing instinct, which made the thing, which he saw or read of, a living and a lasting reality'.

### CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE,

who lived unwisely, and who was killed in a common tavern-brawl at the early age of twenty-nine, was, in a sense, Shakespeare's leader. He first used blank-verse in English drama. He first enfranchised the stage from the restrictive conventions of stage-theorists. He first saw dramatic possibilities in such motives of human action, hidden as yet in chronicle, *novella*, or *Volksbuch*, as—

QUALITY	DRAMATIC MOTIVE	MARLOWE'S	SHAKESPEARE'S	GOETHE'S
Ambition	Power-greed of kings	<i>Tamburlaine</i>	<i>Richard III</i> ( <i>Lady Macbeth</i> )	
Avarice	Gold-greed of usurers	<i>Jew of Malta</i>	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	
Lust	Sense-greed of book-weary philosophers	<i>Faustus</i>	—	<i>Faust</i>

To this extent, Swinburne was justified when he wrote that Marlowe 'first and alone guided Shakespeare into the right way of work'. But, clear as the guidance was and closely as Shakespeare followed it, he saw cause to depart from the lead. Marlowe laid on his colours too lavishly. *Tamburlaine*, *Barabas*, and *Faustus* never ceased from their cravings. Their appetites grew by feeding, and admitted no contrast or relief. Marlowe missed the true tragic perception, revealed to his greater contemporary, as we saw in *Hamlet's* psychology, that conscience has tongues and that motives are mixed. Fortunately, we can make

the comparison. Shakespeare never treated Faust : a wider than Tudor philosophy was required to analyse the Faust-hunger and to extract the universal Faust-soul from the curious, God-provoking alchemist. But Shakespeare did draw the absolutist and the usurer, and a comparison of Tamburlaine with Richard III (or with Macbeth and his wife), or of Barabas with Shylock, will make the differences clear. Shakespeare's finer humanity reduced Marlowe's violent effects, and, consequently, a nobler eloquence chastened the turgid expression.

We have already<sup>1</sup> mentioned a cause, apart from the dramatist's youth, which helps to explain Marlowe's drama. For a brief but perilous moment a point of view described as Machiavellian was capturing English society. Salvation was due, among other factors, to the moral bias of Puritanism, to the sturdy common sense of English seamen, and to the downright hardihood of our Tudor sovereigns ; ultimately, indeed, to a temperamental difference between Englishmen and Italians. But the danger was present, nevertheless. We cited the ominous verses from the Prologue to Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*—

‘ Albeit the world thinks Machiavel is dead,  
Yet was his soul but flown across the Alps ’ ;

and we remarked the grave distinction between this new migration of Italian culture and the older transit of the Alps, when Colet, Reuchlin and their peers brought home the rich seeds of Southern Hellenism. Now, in the words of Roger Ascham, in his *Schoolmaster*, 1570, the new Italian missionaries were bringing—‘ for religion, Papistry, or worse ; for learning, less, commonly, than they carried out with them ; for a policy, a factious heart, a discoursing head, a mind to meddle in all men's affairs ; for experience, plenty of new mischiefs never known in

<sup>1</sup> See page 170 above.

England before ; for manners, variety of vanities and a change of filthy living '.

A stern and terrible indictment, and it is supported by many a harsh reference to the Italianate Englishman of the day. Yet Marlowe, too, was right. He saw dramatic possibilities in Machiavellism of which he was not to be robbed by any censor of national morals. He visualized his Machiavellian hero, and brought him alive upon the stage.

‘ I count religion but a childish toy ’,

he wrote further in the Prologue to the *Jew of Malta* (was this the ‘Papisty or worse’ of Ascham’s bitter indictment?); and then he announced the central dogma of the Machiavellian creed, the central motive of the Machiavellian drama—

‘ Might first made kings, and laws were then most sure  
When, like the Draco’s, they were writ in blood ’.

The ‘mighty line’ of Marlowe, as Ben Jonson called it not ambiguously, rolled on with double significance. The blood flowed on Marlowe’s stage. Might made right, and kings ruled by Divine Right, and we get the exaggerative effects typified by Tamburlaine’s boast—

‘ I will, with engines never exercised,  
Conquer, sack, and utterly consume  
Your cities and your golden palaces ;  
And, till by vision or by speech I hear  
Immortal Jove say, Cease, my Tamburlaine !  
I will persist a terror to the world. . . .  
There is a God, full of revenging wrath,  
From whom the thunder and the lightning breaks,  
Whose scourge I am, and him will I obey. . . .  
See where my slave, the ugly monster, Death,  
Shaking and quivering, pale and wan for fear,  
Stands aiming at me with his murdering dart,  
Who flies away at every glance I give,  
And when I look away, comes stealing on.  
Villain, away and hie thee to the field !  
I and my armies come to load thy back  
With souls of thousand mangled carcasses.  
Look, where he goes ! but see, he comes again,  
Because I stay ! Teehelles, let us march,  
And weary Death with bearing souls to Hell ’.

But this dramatic moment was shortlived; Machiavelli's hour in England passed away. Did kings deem to weary Death? Swiftly Shakespeare confounded them by a touch of worldly philosophy—

‘For God’s sake, let us sit upon the ground  
And tell sad stories of the death of kings :  
How some have been deposed ; some slain in war ;  
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed ;  
Some poisoned by their wives ; some sleeping kill’d ;  
All murdered : for within the hollow crown  
That rounds the mortal temples of a king,  
Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits,  
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,  
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,  
To monarchize, be feared, and kill with looks,  
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,  
As if this flesh which walls about our life  
Were brass impregnable, and measur’d thus  
Comes at the last and with a little pin  
Bores through his castle-wall, and farewell king !’  
—*King Richard II*, iii, 2.

Marlowe’s eloquence is irrecoverable to-day. The late Stephen Phillips (1867-1915) emulated it in his *Herod* and other dramas ; but his romantic heroes were too much subject to attacks of neo- or neuro-romanticism. They persisted in questioning the sea as to its traffic with the moon, and a part of their rhetoric was false and a part of their beauty was artificial. Marlowe’s ornaments arose out of construction, because the inspiration which he drew had been communicated from the gallery to the green-room. The pages of Hakluyt and Raleigh and similar writers in England and Spain leaped with the waves of the sea and shone with the light on the waves. Men talked like the knights of King Arthur and fought like the Australians at Gallipoli, and the combination made the rich music of English and Spanish drama.

The new time will bring a new poesy. The ‘ ‘im first ! ’ recorded in the Great War of an English private who knew not Sir Philip Sidney will not lack

appropriate celebration ; for art imitates nature, and, where heroic action leads, heroic representation is bound to follow. Meanwhile, we acknowledge the eloquence which matched the manners of Marlowe's day. The hyperbole suited the age, with its high passions and bright colours—

‘ Was this the face that launched a thousand ships  
And burnt the hopeless towers of Ilion ? . . .  
O thou art fairer than the evening air,  
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars ’.

We note, too, that Marlowe's second style, as far as his short life admitted its development out of his first, indicated that maturity might have pruned the worse excesses of youth. His *Edward II* was composed on a quieter level of action ; he is said to have collaborated with Shakespeare in *i, ii, iii Henry VI* ; he had a nice taste in translating Latin poetry, and he wrote some exquisite songs.

If Marlowe had lived to be seventy, and if Shakespeare had survived him fifty years, how many plays would they have written, and how complete would have been their domination of the English stage ? This is not quite an idle question. It is suggested by the contemporary record in Spain of

LOPE DE VEGA

and

CALDERON,

whose activity covered Shakespeare's lifetime and extended to the last quarter of the seventeenth century <sup>1</sup>. They overlapped from 1622-35, and Lope de Vega welcomed Calderon with the generous appreciation of conscious worth.

But, though the lives of Marlowe and Shakespeare had been equal in extension to the golden age of

<sup>1</sup> Lope Felix de Vega Carpio, 1562-1635 ; Pedro Calderon de la Barca, 1600-81.



Spain, they would still not have been similar in power. The Spanish fame of Lope de Vega and Calderon transcends even the imagination of these events which did not occur on the English stage. We do not suggest that their plays, either separately or jointly, are greater in essential dramatic qualities than those of Shakespeare, either with or without Marlowe's. Such an argument would be impossible to sustain, and would have little interest in refutation. Our point is, that the Spanish tandem differed from the English pair in a natural prodigality of talent and a kind of intensive culture, to be felt rather than expounded. Cervantes, a prince of critics, wrote of Lope in 1614 as *el monstruo de naturaleza*, 'the prodigy of nature', and prodigious as well as prodigal is an epithet that sticks. Robert Southey, an English Poet Laureate, writing two hundred years afterwards in the *Quarterly Review* (October, 1817) quoted the following remarks from a Life of Lope by Lord Holland—

'So associated was the idea of excellence with his name, that it grew in common conversation to signify anything perfect in its kind; and a Lope diamond, a Lope day, or a Lope woman, became fashionable and familiar modes of expressing their good qualities'.

It is a striking test of popularity, and to some it will recall the *Trilby* vogue in our own country and in America.

The Lope rage was a local phenomenon. Lope de Vega has never enjoyed a universal appeal to human sympathy and sentiment, and the nineteenth century appraised his poetic value in a diminishing scale of affirmation. Take, again, the *Quarterly Review* in October, 1894—

‘To us, perhaps, Lope remains as great a wonder as he was to his contemporaries and fellow-countrymen; but we can hardly be expected to share in their profound veneration for gifts that in our eyes belong more properly to the mechanic than to the artist. To them Lope was the greatest of all poets; to us it is a question whether he was a poet at all’.

We shall not try to solve this critics’ problem. Poets, like critics, have their fashions, and the twentieth century may reverse some confident judgments of its predecessor. The restoration of Wordsworth from neglect was one of the first transformations of the Great War; and a poet who is a subject of controversy three hundred years after his activity must be something more than a ‘mechanic’. They did not willingly let him die in Spain. Lope’s funeral rites lasted for a fortnight, so many wished to do him honour; and, when he was buried at last, Pedro Calderon was reigning in his stead.

*Le roi est mort, vive le roi!* The same intensive talent and the same prodigal profusion distinguished Lope and his successor. But Calderon, too, derives his fame from local and temporal conditions. ‘He worked in the lines set by Lope’, we are told, ‘borrowing his ideas, his characters, his plots’; and, though Calderon is far too big to be dismissed as Lope’s disciple, though he royally liquidated his borrowings, even when they included complete scenes, yet it is not always clear which dramatist wrote which play of the many hundreds that survive out of their works. But there is another side to this account. Without presuming to strike a debtor and creditor balance between Calderon, his predecessors and successors, we observe that Dr. Robert Bridges, Poet Laureate of England, acknowledged an obligation to Calderon in

his *Christian Captives* and other works. We observe, too, that the French stage adopted him wholeheartedly through its leading dramatist, Corneille; that his English translators have included Shelley, Edward Fitzgerald, and Archbishop Trench; and that, in Germany, Goethe himself, while he once said that Calderon's characters are as alike as tin soldiers, said on another occasion, to Eckermann, that Calderon's 'plays are thoroughly stage-perfect. His genius is of the kind which is at the same time the highest talent'.

Lope de Vega and Calderon together dominated the theatre in Spain. Together they left a permanent impression on the literature of France and England. How were these effects produced, if, as would seem to be true, their art was static, not dynamic, they drew their characters with rigid lines, and they manufactured more than they could polish? Chiefly, their talents were devoted to pleasing the play-going public of their day with infinitely ingenious variations on two clearly defined types of drama: (1) the *comedia de capa y espada*, or comedy of cloak and sword, and (2) the *auto*, or sacramental passion-play. It is urgent to note in this connection that both these kinds corresponded to long-descended sympathies of the Spanish mind. Folded in the cloak of courtesy and girt with the sword of honour, its hilt ready to the hand, the Spaniard of *Amadis* and the Armada and of the old world falling round Don Quixote was ruled by a code of gallantry which survived the fracture of his Empire. He was also the Spaniard of the Inquisition; and, however cruel were the sufferings of the minority which resisted it, its law was the liberty of Spain, or, at least, of Spain's aristocracy, and the trappings and majesty of the Church were the proud symbols of its rule. We have to imagine these conditions, local and temporal, as we have said, in

order to reconstruct the atmosphere of the theatre of Lope and Calderon.

The cloak-and-sword play always turned on a *punctilio*, or gallant's point of honour. Its principal characters

'belonged to the genteel portion of society, accustomed to the picturesque national dress of cloaks and swords, excluding on the one hand those dramas in which royal personages appear, and, on the other, those which are devoted to common life and the humbler classes' <sup>1</sup>.

And the common course of the play was as follows—

'Two ladies, a gallant and his friend, their lovers, a jealous brother or a difficult father, with the attendant servants <sup>2</sup> of all parties; mistake, accident, intrigue and involvement, honour touched and honour righted—such is the universal recipe' <sup>3</sup>.

After this universal recipe, Lope de Vega, followed by Calderon, poured out his plenitude of plays. Southey, a competent judge, computed Lope's output (the ugly word is not inappropriate) at twenty-one million verses. He confessed to 219 plays in 1603, to 1,500 in 1632, and how many there were when he died is now an unknown quantity. Like Alexandre Hardy in France, he wrote what the public wanted; like William Shakespeare in England, he raised the level of public taste; like both, he wrote to please himself; and it happened, no doubt, that many plays

<sup>1</sup> G. Ticknor, *History of Spanish Literature*.

<sup>2</sup> The *gracioso*, or confidential servant, was a long-known character on the Spanish stage. Naharro, in his early *capa y espada* plays, had taken over and improved the part, which he handed on to the golden age dramatists. French drama in Molière and Beaumarchais (Figaro) and English fiction in Fielding and Thackeray (Mr. Morgan) made ample use of the pliant morality and versatile gifts of the 'gentleman's gentleman'.

<sup>3</sup> C. Whibley, in *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. viii.

which he touched or touched up were less completely his work than they were reputed.

A list of titles would be wearisome. Hardly less wearisome in retrospect is the list of plays which were derived from him. When we reach the French dramatists of the *grand siècle* we shall note that Boisrobert's *Folle Gageure* came from Lope's *Mayor imposible*, Rotrou's *Heureux Naufrage* from Lope's *Naufragio Prodigioso*, even Molière's *Médecin malgré lui* from Lope's *Acero de Madrid*. But the value of these researches is limited. Good books, like good men, are appraised independently of their genealogy ; and these facts, though they enhance Lope's fame, do not add to his present popularity. His foreign creditors have not absorbed him. He has still an estate of his own, not in Spain only, but in Europe. To his rich literary endowment Lope added a keen vitality, a true perception of feminine psychology, and an enlightened and a stimulating patriotism. Like other great writers of his age, he was a man of action as well as a man of letters. He sailed on the *San Juan* in the Armada. He loved unwisely and often. He was ordained in 1614, and atoned for his earlier vagaries by ever-increasing penances and rigours. As he was versatile in performance, so he was quick to gauge public taste. He wrote an *Arcadia*, 1598, when arcadizing was fashionable. In the same year his epic *Dragontea* celebrated the death of Sir Francis Drake in six cantos of patriotic glory. Drake had singed the Spanish king's beard ; the ' dragon's ' tail was twisted by the Spanish poet. His *Isidro*, 1559, was devoted to the patron-saint of Madrid. His *Corona tragica*, 1627, an heroic poem on Queens Elizabeth Tudor and Mary Stuart, gave scope to Lope's religious sympathies, and ' The Laurel of Apollo ', 1630, was an essay in criticism on the same lines as Cervantes' ' Journey to Parnassus '.

If Lope de Vega diffused his gifts in his eagerness to satisfy the public, Calderon tended to concentrate on the composition of *auto*-plays with their motive of devotion to the Church and their brilliant spectacular appeal. We do not know how many *autos* he wrote, but the seventy-three now extant are Calderon's most characteristic work and his surest title to renown. He wrote them round subjects taken from the Old or New Testament; he wrote them as moral plays on public events of the day; he wrote them on abstract subjects of Providence and ethics; he wrote them on topics of past history. His fecundity of invention was marvellous. He would treat the same subject—the Fall of Man, for example—half a dozen times over in half a dozen different ways, as allegory, as drama, as personification; and would clothe each several presentation in fresh and vigorous language. The interest is as common as of *Pilgrim's Progress*, the stage-management as perfect as Racine's. The one factor to be postulated, without which all the plays are vain, is the pious, Catholic, Spanish temper.

In the absence of appropriate surroundings, illustration is more than usually difficult. We might quote from the *Faust*-like scene (like, too, to *Paradise Lost*), which Shelley chose for translation out of Calderon's *Magico Prodigioso*. The Demon tells us that he had been named Counselor to the King of kings—

‘ But the high praise  
Stung me with pride and envy, and I rose  
In mighty competition, to ascend  
His seat and place my foot triumphantly  
Upon his subject thrones. Chastised, I know  
The depth to which ambition falls; too mad  
Was the attempt, and not more mad were now  
Repentance of the irrevocable deed;—  
Therefore I chose this ruin, with the glory  
Of not to be subdued, before the shame  
Of reconciling me with Him. . . .



I sailed  
 Over the mighty fabric of the world,—  
 A pirate ambushed in its pathless sands,  
 A lynx crouched watchfully among its caves  
 And craggy shores ; and I have wandered over  
 The expanse of these wide wildernesses  
 In this great ship, whose bulk is now dissolved  
 In the light breathings of the invisible wind,  
 And which the sea has made a dustless ruin '.

Or we might quote an English rendering of a speech out of one of the comedies, which illustrates what has been called the poet's 'tropical richness of hyperbole'. The subject is the illusion of reality and the consequent vanity of belief—

Nought shows clearer to our eyes  
 Than pellucid water bright,  
 Yet its clearness mocks the sight,  
 And within its depths tells lies. . . .  
 Nought is more distinct to view  
 Than the sun's light, yet its beaming  
 Rays, in fiery lustre streaming,  
 Never to our gaze speak true. . . .  
 Nought looks plainer to be seen  
 Than that azure heaven on high,  
 Yet in truth there is no sky. . . .  
 Therefore to reported ill  
 Ere thy full belief be given,  
 Take example from the heaven,  
 From sun's light and crystal rill,—  
 Touch the truth, deep hidden still  
 'Neath false semblance ; if it borrow  
 Now dark shades to cause thee sorrow,  
 Boldly fling them off and wait,  
 Till upon thine altered state  
 Shines a better sun to-morrow ' .<sup>1</sup>

But, lacking the interest, we miss the passion of the one and the delicacy of the other extract. We must be content to mention a few titles, and to register one or two conclusions accepted by the bulk of Calderon's readers. 'The Mayor of Zalamea', for example, has a moving realistic plot on the sacredness of a poor man's home ; the Spanish heroine has been

<sup>1</sup> From *Calderon*, by E. J. Havell, in the 'Foreign Classics' edited by Mrs. Oliphant.

compared to Antigone. 'The Physician of his Own Honour' sears the convention of the *punctilio* on our consciousness. The frolicsome 'Fairy Lady' is as excellent in its class as are the two most stirring tragedies, 'No Monster like Jealousy' and 'Love Greater than Death'. Calderon's life-illusion was so perfect that the story is told of a soldier in the Spanish Guard, who leapt forward, sword in hand, to save the lovely heroine of 'Gomez Arias' from the embraces of an infidel Moor; and play after play was produced in Madrid, Toledo, or Seville, exactly congruous to public sentiment, and exquisitely phrased and staged. Calderon's lyrical gift was supreme, and was displayed most effectively in his *autos*. Hardly less excellent was his skill in dialogue, chiefly shown in the social give-and-take of his *capa y espada* plays, and he commanded the organ-notes, so magnificently seconded by Corneille, appropriate to tragedies of passion. Thus, he completed what Lope had begun, the creation of a national theatre expressing the genius of Spain. Within those national frontiers his fame has always stood high; never higher, within them or beyond them, than at the time when the spirit of man, released from the yoke of the centuries of Reason, reacted from classical rules to the freedom and spontaneity of Renaissance Romance. At that time, towards the close of the eighteenth century, Calderon was united with Shakespeare in a pæan of enthusiastic praise by the German romanticist, August von Schlegel. Appreciation has not been maintained at that height, and it may be doubted if a new time will ever fully revive Schlegel's joy in Calderon's recovery. We would rather cite with approval the temperate and reasoned judgment of a critic who wrote a reply to Schlegel in the *Quarterly Review*, April, 1821. He admitted at once that Calderon

‘ places us indeed in another world, and that world is gay and animated, and perpetually excites our wonder : but we feel a want of kindred sympathy with its inhabitants—their language is not our language ; their feelings are not our feelings ; their hearts not our hearts. . . . In the great poet there must be a harmony of truth and fiction ; Calderon has only the latter : his grandeur and strength must be governed and regulated by propriety ; Calderon riots without restraint or control. . . . Calderon therefore may create an ardent burst of enthusiasm ; but it will soon burn itself out : he will have many admirers, but few lovers of his poetry. He will have appeared before us like a splendid procession, which we should lament not to have seen, but which, when the novelty is passed and curiosity satiated, we shall scarcely wish to pass again before us ’.

With the passing of Calderon from the stage Spanish literature itself passed away. It burned brightly for two hundred years. Its effective history is contained between 1492 and 1681. For consider the significance of these dates. At the end of the fifteenth century (indeed, in 1492 precisely) the Spaniard, Columbus, discovered America, and Spain, whatever her debt to Moorish and Hebrew culture, asserted the national principle of Spain for the Spanish by her overthrow of the Moors and her expulsion of the Jews. At the end of the seventeenth century, within a few years of Calderon’s death, the death of King Charles II, the last of the Habsburg kings of Spain, led to the accession of Philip of Anjou, grandson of the *roi Soleil*, King Louis XIV of France. King Philip’s diminished inheritance was confirmed in 1713 by the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht, which closed the war of the Spanish succession ; and

between these extremes, accordingly, 1492 and 1713, lies the Imperial glory which was Spain, and the roll of great writers who enhanced it. The new king looked backward across the Pyrenees to the French Court which he had left. A brand-new Spanish Academy was founded in 1714, after the model of the *Académie française*, and the old-type ideals of Spanish chivalry were finally submerged.

We venture to emphasize this connection between Spanish history and Spanish literature, not in order to support a disputed theory of criticism, but because we believe it to be true that Spanish literature, as an expression of the Spanish genius, reached its natural term when Philip V succeeded Charles II. The Empire-builders of Spain had been filled with the spirit of their times. Garcilasso was not alone in wielding the sword and the pen; Cervantes was wounded at Lepanto, Lope de Vega sailed with the Armada. The Empire was already breaking to pieces at the time of Calderon's death, and its final fracture was sustained in the Spanish-American War, 1898. Since 1713, Spanish books have been written in plenty, foreign ideas have been assimilated, new ideas have been conceived. Scholars have thronged the academies; historians have worked at the old chronicles; poets, novelists, and dramatists have added their stores to the past. But Spanish literature among the literatures of Europe was written between 1500 and 1700; the literature of Cid and Amadis, of *pecaro* and Quixote, of *auto* and Arcady, of *capa y espada* and *punctilio*, of piety, philosophy, and learning.

It may be that, in the new Europe to arise out of the new wars, a greater Spain will renew, between her mountains and her sea, the lavish ornaments of style and the happy faculty of wit which men prize in her noble past. There are still giants to be slain,

still illusions to be pricked, still castles to be built. And if two centuries of comparative silence prove the ample preparation for a fresh epoch of world-literature on the classic soil of storied Spain, none would welcome it more gladly than the people, who, though they fought with her, shared with her in the sixteenth century the primacy of art and letters.

Of

FRANCIS BACON,

who died in 1626, we shall not presume to write at length, at least as far as his philosophy is concerned.

If we try to reconstruct the past, what, after all, would appear the task of a philosopher in the Renaissance? He found a mass of unrelated *data*, resting on miscellaneous evidence, and in conflict more often than not—this was the crucial difficulty—with an authority as incompetent as it was irrelevant, but negligible only at extreme peril. Plainly, his most pressing business would be arrangement rather than research. He would want to establish a method of proof applicable to all departments of knowledge, and so to justify wisdom to its seekers. Specialization would follow in due course. The minute sub-division of the field, where each group drives its special studies to a conclusion with a place made ready for it, is a system from which we must look back to the conditions of the sixteenth century, when Bacon, in his high and noble phrase, took all knowledge for his province. It was an attempt, prodigious even then, to gather the harvest of Humanism from the four quarters of its industry. But, prodigious though it was, it was necessitated by the requirements of the age. The future of research in all branches demanded a chart of the sciences and a logic or scientific method. These demands, pre-requisite for the demolition of consecrated errors and fallacies, Bacon set himself to

supply in his part-Latin, part-English *Instauratio Magna* (or Great Beginning) of philosophy, which included *The Advancement of Learning* (English, 1605 : revised in Latin, 1623) and the *Novum Organum* (or New Instrument), 1620, and other works.

Hallam tells us of Bacon's philosophy that no books prior to these

'carried mankind so far on the way to truth. None had obtained so thorough a triumph over arrogant usurpation without seeking to substitute another ; and he may be compared with those liberators of nations, who have given them laws by which they might govern themselves, and retained no homage but their gratitude '.

We need not annotate this passage. Bacon founded the inductive method, and kept it true to the poles of experience and observation. He exposed the *idola* or fallacies of the mind, and distributed them into groups of common consent (*tribus*), of personal obscurantism (*specus*), of vulgar language (*fori*), and of false systems (*theatri*). And his ripe harvest of Philosophy left ample gleanings for the essayist.

Unfortunately, it has to be added that Bacon, whose master-brain mapped out the order of human knowledge, failed in common worldly wisdom. He became Lord Chancellor in 1619, and was raised to the peerage as Baron Bacon and Viscount St. Albans. Two years afterwards he fell from power, and risked the forfeiture of his honours, on a charge of bribery and corruption. King James I, whom he had served too obsequiously, remitted the imprisonment and the fine, but he could not remit the shame, and the most we can say in mitigation is that Court memoirs of the age are full of evidence to the temptations in which statesmen and courtiers moved.



We turn with greater pleasure to Bacon's *Essays*, which, with his *New Atlantis*, are his claim to repute as a man of letters. The profit of learning to literature is always indirect. Its conclusions, in the final resort, become axioms of general knowledge, and illuminate tracts of art outside of their special domain. This was Tennyson's way with the chemistry and physics of the nineteenth century; and this may almost be said to have been Bacon's way with himself, the essayist's utilizing the philosopher's. For, properly, Bacon's *Essays* are little more than an elaboration of entries made in his commonplace books. They were written up from notes that occurred to him in the preparation of his learned works. 'Civil and moral counsels' is his own description of their contents, and they 'came home', he declared, to 'men's business and bosoms'. They are essays in secular thought, and, as attempts at definition and induction, at transitory moralizing, and so forth, they differ from Montaigne's *Essais* in their pithy and proverbial form. They discussed all kinds of common topics: Truth, Death, Revenge, Love, Great Place, Friendship, Gardens, to mention a few of the fifty-eight titles included in the 1625 edition, which was reprinted from 1597 and 1602; and they were characterized time after time by exceptional vigour and depth. We submit half a dozen examples, by which the bulk may be judged—

'Revenge is a kind of wild justice'.

'Many a man's strength is in opposition'.

'Houses are built to live in and not to look on'.

'All rising to great place is by a winding stair'.

'Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man'.

'Suspensions among thoughts are like bats among birds; they ever fly by twilight'.

Years ago, Alexander Smith, an essayist not without renown, wrote in *Dreamthorp*, 1853: 'Bacon seems to have written his *Essays* with Shakespeare's pen'. This is all there is of truth in a theory, as tiresome as it is futile, which has sought to prove identic authorship for the works of Shakespeare and Bacon. All the Renaissance writers were interdependent and correlated. We have seen more than once in these pages that the republic of letters in the Renaissance was a genuine commonwealth with a true community of goods; and a likeness in outlook on the world and in occasional passages and phrases is wholly insufficient evidence on which to build such crooked conclusions. The parallels between any two writers in this age might be matched, if the investigation were worth while, in the works of twenty others in every country in Europe; and it was partly the alleged obscurity of Shakespeare's biography which selected him as chief victim for the ordeal by cryptogram. We should cultivate fertile fields. There is still so much beauty to be revealed by grateful and diligent study of the masters of Renaissance literature that the search for imputed secrets may well be left for the entertainment of scholar-errantry.

## CHAPTER IX.

### The Age of Milton.

THE lonely figure of John Milton (1608-74) towers in the seventeenth century, like Dante's in an earlier age. Like Dante, he measured in poetry the space between heaven and hell. Like Dante, he brooded above storms, and sought in the counsels of statesmen the key to the polity of the archangels. Like Dante, he stood, a high rock, silent and seeming inaccessible, while the warm, white spindrift of music softened the rigour of his face, and the sweet, new tide of the Renaissance flooded his inland soul.

We think of Milton in Puritan England. We imagine him in Cromwell's cabinet, forcing his poet's pen to compose political pamphlets, and making a wonder of the prose which flowed with such facile invective from the inkhorns of his contemporaries. Did he plead in *Areopagitica* for the licensing of books, it was with the voice of Lucifer, son of the morning—

‘I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without heat and dust.

. . . ‘Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full

midday beam; purging and unsealing her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms'.

Did he enter in 1649 the lists of *pro*- and *anti*-regicides, he brought to bear on their dispute the sweeping dogmatism of a pamphlet entitled—

‘Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, proving that it is lawful and hath been held so through all ages, for any who have the power to call to account a Tyrant, a Wicked King, and after due conviction to depose and put him to death, if the ordinary Magistrates have neglected to do it’.

Did he read the so-called ‘King’s Book’, the meditations of King Charles I, written in solitude and sorrow, and known as *Eikon Basilike*, he suffered no weed of sentiment to break the granite of his reply in the *Eikonoclastes*, or ‘Image-breaker’, of 1649. Lastly, his writings on divorce are linked in ecclesiastical history with Reformation doctrines on marriage, and are darkened rather than relieved by the personal interest of his own matrimonial experiments: with Mary Powell in 1643, with Catherine Woodcock in 1656, and with Elizabeth Minshull in 1662. Mary, the only wife whom he ever saw (he became blind about 1654), was probably the only wife whom he ever loved. She left him after a month of marriage, and he took her back in 1645 till her death in 1653. Catherine, his ‘late espoused saint’, died in 1658, and his third wife survived him. He wrote in all four treatises on divorce, with erring Mary, a Royalist, in his thoughts.

Or we think of Milton in his youth, after St. Paul's School and Cambridge, at his father's country-house at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, 'wholly intent', as he tells us, 'through a period of absolute leisure, on a steady perusal of the Greek and Latin writers'. If he paid an occasional visit to London, it was 'either for the purpose of buying books, or for that of learning anything new in Mathematics or in Music, in which I then took delight'; and the excluded gaiety of those years (1632-38) is rarely allowed to break through the studious devotion of the poet-elect. We hear it in the ode to Mirth—

'Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee  
Jest, and youthful Jollity,  
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,  
Nods and becks and wreathèd smiles. . . .  
When the merry bells ring round,  
And the jocund rebecks sound,  
To many a youth and many a maid  
Dancing in the chequered shade,  
And young and old come forth to play  
On a sunshine holiday. . . .  
There let Hymen oft appear  
In saffron robe, with taper clear,  
And pomp and feast, and revelry,  
With mask and antique pageantry;  
Such sights as youthful poets dream  
On summer eves by haunted stream'.

—*L' Allegro* (1632).

We hear it again in the elegy to Edward King—

'Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute;  
Tempered to the oaten flute,  
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel  
From the glad sound would not be absent long;  
And old Damoetas loved to hear our song. . . .  
Alas! what boots it with incessant care  
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,  
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?  
Were it not better done, as others use,  
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,  
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?'

—*Lycidas* (1637).

We hear it again in the Court-masque (*Comus*, 1634), which Milton dreamed on a summer eve in youth.

But how quickly he checked the sound, and curbed the never immoderate desire, and broke back to his own appointed course—

‘ Hence, vain deluding Joys,  
The brood of Folly without father bred ! . .  
Let my due feet never fail  
To walk the studious cloister’s pale,  
And love the high embowèd roof,  
With antique pillars massy-proof,  
And storied windows richly-dight,  
Casting a dim religious light.  
There let the pealing organ blow,  
To the full-voiced quire below,  
In service high and anthems clear,  
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes. . . .  
These pleasures, Melancholy, give,  
And I with thee will choose to live ’.

—*Il Penseroso* (1632).

Not to sport with Amaryllis in the shade, but

‘ To scorn delights and live laborious days. . . .  
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,  
Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves,  
Where, other groves and other streams among,  
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,  
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,  
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love ’,

was the final message which Milton read from King’s fate; and with how stern a purpose he rebuked a temptation to indolence and softness we know from the Lady’s speech in *Comus*—

‘ Impostor ! do not charge most innocent Nature,  
As if she would her children should be riotous  
With her abundance. She, good cateress,  
Means her provision only to the good,  
That live according to her sober laws,  
And holy dictate of spare Temperance. . . .  
Thou hast nor ear nor soul to apprehend  
The sublime notion and high mystery  
That must be uttered to unfold the sage  
And serious doctrine of Virginity ;  
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know  
More happiness than this thy present lot ’.

Yet England was merry in Milton’s youth ; aye, and in other countries, too, ‘ jest and jollity ’



abounded. Even on Germany's soil, scarred by devastating wars, little patches of green made manifest the eternal springing of new life. The literary record of the years, say, from Shakespeare's prime to Milton's manhood, fills us with amazement when we read the difficult and allusive speech of the Pilot of the Galilean Lake in *Lycidas* (lines 113-31). That so young a poet in such surroundings should have pondered so deeply on Church and State as to command the scornful assurance which inspires every word in those lines is a fact more remarkable by contrast with the tone and level of his day. Small wonder that the flowers which he strewed on the laureate hearse of *Lycidas* (lines 139-50) could never have been gathered in one season. Even before he went blind, the eyes of Milton were turned inward.

Roundly, for thirty years (1637-67), between *Lycidas* and *Paradise Lost*, Milton the poet was lost in Milton the Puritan and State Secretary. We propose to utilize this interval in order to make a brief survey of the state of letters in other countries. How far was the thought of the age attuned to Milton's sublimity? How far was it congruous with the style of the leaders of the *grand siècle* in France, who opened the centuries of Reason? The inquiry should help us on our return to measure Milton's second period more accurately.

Postponing till the next volume the 'Bon sens' of Boileau and his congeners, and retracing presently our footsteps from the death of Calderon (1681) in Spain, we start with the annals of

## I. GERMANY.

There a native doctrine of Pietism, derived through the Mystics and Reformers—Thomas à Kempis and Luther, to give them names—and a not less native spice of satire were combined with the fate of the

Thirty Years' War (1618-48) to resist the tide of the Renaissance.

Chief of the German Pietists was Johann Scheffler (1624-77), the angel of Silesia (Angelus Silesius). His angelic quality was displayed in the couplets of his *Cherubinische Wandersmann*, in which he poured out his soul in a vision of communion with God :

'Nought is but I and thou ; if we two are no more,  
God is no longer God, nor Heaven roofs us o'er'.

'For me there is no Death ; tho' every hour I perish,  
Yet every hour I find a better life to cherish'.

His later 'Sacred Pastorals' were less successful. Like an earlier Pietist, Friedrich von Spee (1591-1635), and, on a wider view, like so many pioneers in Humanism, Scheffler could not get away from a literal imitation of ancient models. He transferred the imagery of Pagan myths to the hymns of the Christian Church, and this feature repels admiration for his otherwise pure and pious musings.

Meanwhile, German satirists did their best to rouse the hearts of their fellow-countrymen from the woful spectacle of war, and to restore the self-esteem which that bitter experience was sapping. A Spanish lampoonist, Quevedo, supplied a model to Hans Michael Moscherosch (1601-69) for his 'wonderful and veracious Visions' (*Gesichte*), in which Philander, the seer, exposed the nakedness of the land and ridiculed German obsequiousness to foreign speech, dress, and manners. More constructive work in the same direction was done by Friedrich von Logau (1604-55), who is deeply indebted to Lessing for a revival of fame in the eighteenth century. Logau's main weapon was the epigram, which he polished with vigour and skill. His (about) 3,000 examples were published in 1654 under the title of *Sinngedichte*, by Solomon von Golau, Solomon being the

king of wisdom-literature, and Golau Logau respelt. Their variety and range is remarkable, and Lessing particularly recommended them for their sturdy appeal to national sentiment. Logau hated the Frenchified German as heartily as Ascham abhorred the Italianate Englishman of his day—

‘ Alamodish dress, as man’s outward wearing,  
Alamodish thought, so his inward bearing ’.

Longfellow has translated some of these epigrams ; one rather clever, for instance, on poverty and blindness—

‘ A blind man is a poor man, and blind a poor man is ;  
For the former seeth no man, and the latter no man sees ’.

Most famous, perhaps, is *Retribution*, which is quoted more often than it is referred to its correct source—

‘ Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding  
small ;  
Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He  
all ’.

The national voice called for by the satirists <sup>1</sup> was forthcoming in the *Simplicissimus* of Christoffel von Grimmelshausen (1625-75). The full title of his book was Rabelaisian, and the method of treatment was picaresque ; but, despite these reminiscences of France and Spain, ample credit is due to Grimmelshausen for the invention of a German type of character depicted with old-fashioned humour. The Spanish rogue-element was combined with a genuine Teuton element of forest-romance. *Simplicissimus*, throughout his adventures, ‘ abundantly merry and useful to read ’, is a child of the German woods, and longs to be reconciled with nature. Not in the conventional sense of Sicilian-Italian Arcadians, masquerading as swains and nymphs in a town-wit’s dream of the countryside, but rather in Quixote’s mood of fitting reality to

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that in 1893 Sir William Watson wrote a sonnet on ‘ Exaggerated Deference to Foreign Literary Opinion ’. There is little originality in human frailties.

ideals and in the mood of many later romanticists, Grimmelshausen repaired for his fellow-countrymen the shaken hope of a quiet German life. Like Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister*, the writer was probably transforming his personal experience to his book. We know very little of his biography. He seems to have served both as soldier and as priest, and to have closed his days as bailiff to a bishop. Certainly, like his *Simplicissimus*, Grimmelshausen was carried away from his father's cottage to the wars, and had to carve a philosophy of conduct with the sword of a soldier of fortune. His final abandonment of adventure, and his return to the simple life, even after swaggering in Paris as the 'beau alman' (Allemand) of *alamodish* fancy, taught a moral which good Germans laid to heart.

Among Logau's epigrams was one which ran as follows—

' Im Latein sind viel Poeten, immer aber ein Virgil ;  
Deutsche haben einen Opitz, Dichter sonst eben viel '.

We leave it in its native self-complacency. Martin Opitz (1597-1639), like Vida <sup>1</sup> in Italy, was not a Virgil, but a Virgilizer, yet it is true that his is the only name which can be mentioned in the same breath as Ronsard and du Bellay in France or Wyatt and Surrey in England. We make this statement the more readily, since we are warned on high authority that 'if any critic speaks disrespectfully of Opitz, I fear that it argues him uncritical' <sup>2</sup>. We shall try to avoid disrespect. Still, the measure of Opitz is comparative, and it is legitimate to observe that, at the time when his lonely standard was raised for Renaissance ideals, Cervantes had written *Don Quixote*, Shakespeare's plays were on the boards, and the Pleiad had finished its great work. Nothing illustrates

<sup>1</sup> See p. 205 above.

<sup>2</sup> G. Saintsbury, *History of Criticism*.

more clearly the havoc wrought in Germany by religious and territorial wars.

Faithful to du Bellay's example, Martin Opitz opened his campaign with a defence of the German tongue. That it was written in Latin is one defect; another is, that he prejudiced his cause by calling it 'The Contempt of the Teuton Tongue' (1617). Seven years afterwards his 'Book of German Poetry', inscribed to his civic fathers in Silesia, made propaganda as a more attractive plea for an Italian Renaissance in Germany; and, while the pedantry of his code was suited to the backwardness of his clients, Opitz has a place among the prophets of Parnassus, and certainly he formulated principles of real value for current practice.

Life treated Opitz somewhat harshly. The German states were 'gey ill' for poets, and he frequently changed his allegiance. In 1625 he visited Vienna, to receive the coveted bay from the Emperor Ferdinand II, whose quarrel with the German princes was bringing endless dole on Opitz's countrymen. He sojourned in Amsterdam and Paris, and he died in the service of the King of Poland. Among his works were a poetic version of the Psalms (a frequent exercise of Ronsardists), a translation of Sidney's *Arcadia*, and original pastorals and lyrics. Imitative as his writings were, they were at once a tonic and a protest. After Opitz, German literature was weaned from medieval tediousness and artlessness; and it was due to the reforms which he advocated that literary societies of the Della Crusca pattern began to be multiplied in German cities.

We need not enumerate these academies. One was the Order of the Palms, or the Fructifying (*Fruchtbringende*) Society; another was the Pegnitz Shepherds, or the Laureate Order of Flowers; a third was the Swans of the Elbe. The fanciful names



corresponded to a genuine desire to attract and interest adherents. But the gospel according to Martin Opitz was at best a frigid affair, and the Renaissance *manquée* of its First and Second Silesian Schools pursued an inglorious course to an inconspicuous conclusion. It did not lack the encouragement of contemporaries. Indeed, it is pathetic to observe how eagerly its mechanical notes were greeted as masterly and authentic. Thus, the high-sounding name of a 'German Ovid' was accorded to Christian Hoffmann von Hofmannswaldau (1618-79), a learned German Italianate poet, who translated Marini's *Pastor Fido* and added Marinism to Opitzism. If we cannot praise his 'Heroic Epistles' (*Heldenbriefe*), still less can we affect to admire the turgid and overladen style of his disciple, Daniel Casper von Lohenstein (1635-83), who wrote novels and plays. His verses groaned with *ach!* and *weh!* and resounded with the thunder of the infinitudes, and they leave on the tired ear an impression of rude and bad taste.

But philosophy came with healing wings. The white light of scientific thought was spread from half a dozen beacon-stations, to touch with its tender radiance the sores of German experience and to scatter the shadows and the gloom. The story of the German *Aufklärung*, or Illumination, belongs to a later epoch of this history, and is partly outside the sphere of letters. We venture to anticipate the one and to trespass the other, in order to refer to the name of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), mathematician and philosopher, who shared with Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), his contemporary, the throne of science in that age. They made so many discoveries in the region of the higher mathematics that they disputed who discovered which, and Leibniz's correspondence and intercourse with the master-minds of his day brought Germany back to modern Europe,



and ushered in the new period of her culture which closed at the death of Goethe, 1832. Leibniz was a strenuous advocate of the revival of German speech and manners. In his idealism and mental grasp he is most like Plato among philosophers, and, deeply as his system of thought is in debt to the intellectual rationalism of France, England, and the Netherlands, he filled it with a Teuton consciousness and coloured it with personal optimism.

Another early Illuminant was Dr. Samuel Pufendorf (1632-94), who taught international law at the University of Leipsic, where, doubtless, he knew young Leibniz, as the son of a professor in another faculty. Pufendorf's Latin writings were of immense service to the cause of the *Aufklärung*. His letters on the status of the German nation opened with the frank remark that 'Germany is an irregular body, *monstro simile*', like a monster; and he sketched a new order of civil government, based on liberal principles of law.

It is good to take leave of German literature, at the close of the Reformation epoch, which disappointed so many Renaissance hopes, on this high level of philosophic endeavour, and to conclude from the examples of Pufendorf and Leibniz that the champions of reconstruction in Germany will succeed in restoring to great and noble uses the language of Wolfram von Eschenbach and the faith and morals of Martin Luther.

The conditions of life in

## II. SPAIN

were not encouraging to philosophy during the epoch dominated in literature by Lope de Vega and Calderon. True, a doctrine of conduct known as Quietism, akin to the Pietism of Scheffler, was derived by Miguel de Molinos (1640-97) from the mystic

teachings of Ponce de Leon and Santa Teresa. But Molinos ranked as an ecclesiastical heretic. He aimed at raising the soul 'above sacraments and attributes and dogmas, beyond the Trinity and the Incarnation, to "a view, wholly obscure and indistinct and general, of the Divine Essence as it was" ' <sup>1</sup>, and we cannot discuss his doctrine here. It entered European thought through France, where we shall meet it again in the rival camps of Fénelon and Bossuet, and we may note that Shorthouse, author of *John Inglesant*, issued as recently as 1884 a selection of *Golden Thoughts* from the 'Spiritual Guide' published at Rome by Molinos in 1665.

The nearest approach to philosophy in Spanish literature was along the moral vein worked by the maxim-makers. A leading writer in this class was Balthasar Gracian (1601-58), whose *Oraculo Manual y Arte de Prudencia*, 1647, was translated into German by Schopenhauer, and has more recently been issued in English by the late Dr. Joseph Jacobs. The little book is packed with wise counsels, not too worldly for general acceptance, and it is more than likely that La Rochefoucauld, in the coming century of Reason in France, owed something to Gracian's example—

'Leave your luck when winning'.

'You must pass through the circumference of time before arriving at the centre of opportunity'.

'To be inaccessible is the fault of those who distrust themselves'.

'To overlook forms a large part of the art of ruling'.

'A suspicion of failure in the mind of the doer is proof positive of it in that of the onlooker'.

'The wise leave things before things leave them'.

'Do not show your wounded finger'.

<sup>1</sup> G. Ticknor, *op. cit.*

In a generation eager to acquire the symbols of independent thought and judgment, these inductive lessons of experience came home, like Bacon's, to men's business.

Gracian wrote another book, more ambitious but less generally attractive. It took shape as the romance of Critilo, a high-minded Spanish nobleman, who is shipwrecked on a desert island, which has plausibly been identified as St. Helena. The geography is less important than the fable, which Defoe followed in *Robinson Crusoe*. Critilo meets a 'noble savage', and cultivates the virgin field of his mind in the life and thought of the age of King Philip IV of Spain. The treatment has reminded many readers of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, but the Spanish Jesuit differed from the English Puritan by a lack of vividness and illusion. Once more, as often in this epoch, we note more promise than performance in Spanish writers outside the first class, and we observe that the promise was fulfilled in France and England, not in Spain.

On the whole, the Spaniard was content to take his morals and conduct from the theatre. Song and drama flourished in the seventeenth century, almost to the exclusion of other kinds, and we select from a long list of writers the names of not more than three or four, who derive significance not only from what they wrote but from the use which was made of their writings.

Thus, Guillen de Castro of Bellvis (1569-1631) was the author of about forty plays in the manner of Lope de Vega. His *Don Quixote* was dramatized from Cervantes. His 'Prodigy of the Mountains' reappeared in Calderon (*Magico Prodigioso*) and Goethe (*Faust*). His 'Youthful Adventures of the Cid' (*Mocedades del Cid*), 1618, was founded on national chronicles, and reappeared, almost verbally in many

passages, in the *Cid*, 1637, of Corneille. De Castro invented the tragic motive of a conflict between will and fate, or duty and desire, in the soul of the hero or heroine, and his *Mocedades* 'did more than any other single drama to determine for two centuries the character of the theatre all over the Continent of Europe'. The gay 'Deceiver (*Burlador*) of Seville' by Tirso de Molina<sup>1</sup> (1570-1648) introduced the *Libertine* of Shadwell, 1676, Molière's *Festin de Pierre*, 1665, Byron's *Don Juan*, and Mozart's opera. Gomez de Quevedo (1580-1645) wrote picaresque novels; most notably 'Buscan, the great Sharper' (*el gran Tacano*), 1626, which influenced German satirists, and was famous in Jacobean England. Juan Ruiz de Alarcon, a Mexican by birth, settled in Spain in 1611, and wrote, among other plays, 'Suspicious Truth' (*Verdad Sospechosa*), which Corneille turned into *le menteur*, 1644; thus doubling in comedy the debt which he had incurred to Spain in his French tragedy of the *Cid*. But it is idle to multiply these notes. The Spanish stage, outside the great masters, was absorbed in the French stage of the *grand siècle*, and till we reach that epoch in the next volume we may reasonably neglect such a judgment as that of the diarist, Samuel Pepys, who deemed Shakespeare's *Othello* 'a mean thing' in comparison with a Spanish play by Antonio Coello, which he read in an English version on August 20, 1666. For our list degenerates into a catalogue, and it is chiefly pertinent to observe the foundation of French drama on Spanish models.

Yet Pepys was entitled to his opinion. If to-day we do not prefer Coello's *Adventures of Five Hours* to *Othello*, we remark that plays *à noticia* were ousting the plays *à fantasia*<sup>2</sup>, that the 'law of writ', as Polonius called it, was superseding dramatic

<sup>1</sup> Pen-name of Gabriel Tellez.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 198 above.

'liberty' <sup>1</sup>, and that, in the age of Calderon in Spain and of Corneille in France, 'Jonson's learned sock' was likely to be held in higher honour than 'Shakespeare, Fancy's child'.

Certainly, Shakespeare's success was never repeated or rivalled in

### III. ENGLAND.

The supremacy of Shakespeare in his generation is one of the mysteries of the spirit which verily bloweth where it listeth. An outward sign of it is found in a difference between the private life of Shakespeare and some of his contemporaries. These mixed more freely than he in the literary quarrels of the time, and not a few of them, like Marlowe, met ill fortune and an early death.

Take Thomas Nash, for example, whose short life (1567-1601) falls within Shakespeare's span. He wrote a clever picaresque novel, *Jack Wilton*, and a vulgar comedy, *The Isle of Dogs*. But the main occupation of Nash in the roistering crowd at the booksellers' and in the green-rooms was active and bitter pamphleteering. Chiefly he aimed his shafts at Puritans in doxology and purists in literature, and he dealt some shrewd blows at Gabriel Harvey, the cock of his own Areopagus, in a sheaf of satires, of which the best was *Have with you to Saffron Walden!* This was Harvey's birthplace in Essex, and the implication was obvious, that Essex mud suited Harvey's wit. Such a gibe would have left Shakespeare cold. His purpose was steady before him, to get back from the business of London and the society of wits to the clean uplands of Warwickshire and the friendly faces of Stratford-on-Avon.

The tribe of playwright-pamphleteers included

<sup>1</sup> Hamlet, ii, 2, 421.

Thomas Lodge and Robert Greene. Lodge's comedy of *Rosalynde* was transformed into *As You Like It*; Greene's most notable play was an English pastoral, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. He was notable, too, for attacking Shakespeare. His *Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance* (Greene died untimely at thirty-two) contains the references to an 'upstart crow, beautified with our feathers', and to Johannes Factotum, 'the only shake-scene in the country', which plainly pointed at his greatest contemporary.

A belief that envy of Shakespeare extended even to Ben Jonson (1573-1637) has now been abandoned. Jonson referred to Shakespeare as 'not of an age but for all time', and his noble eulogy is as appropriate as the epitaph 'rare Ben Jonson', which an admirer inscribed on the stone which covers Jonson's remains in the Abbey.

'Rare Ben's' life was as adventurous as a Spaniard's. He fought in England's wars in Flanders. Returning home about 1592, he took to play-acting and play-writing, and ruffled with the best of them in London. He killed a colleague in a duel and was branded and sent to prison. In his remorse, he turned Roman Catholic, though he reverted again twelve years after. Contemporaries describe him as quarrelsome, and the facts of biography concur. But his irritability was intellectual. Jonson's disposition, like Juvenal's, was governed by an overweening hate of sham, artifice, and vice. He had a strong, self-confident character, with the seemingly arrogant exterior which is often acquired by such natures in defence against promptings to compromise. Like a later Johnson he loved good talk, and took a chief part in it himself; and if, at the Mermaid or other taverns, he sometimes, as was alleged, sacrificed a friend to a jest, we are not to think that men's feelings



were so sensitive at that epoch as to break a friendship on an epigram. The wordy warfare was unending, and the victory went to the better man.

Here we may imitate Shakespeare, and leave these side-issues aside. Except in the field of biography, they have little or no general interest. It is by the song-books of the age, far more than by its drama after Shakespeare, and infinitely more than by its pamphlets, that the seventeenth century in England holds its own in literary annals.

Everyone sang. They sang in their plays. They sang in their pamphlets. They sang at their prayers. Few read John Lyly's *Campaspe*, a comedy of courtly manners, in which Plato visits Alexander the Great ; but who does not know the song—

‘ Cupid and my Campaspe played  
At cards for kisses. Cupid payed ’ ?

Few read Greene's pamphlets or plays : *Friar Bacon*, from English folklore ; *Orlando Furioso*, from Ariosto ; *James IV*, from Scottish history through Italian models. But who does not know his song—

‘ Ah, what is Love ? It is a pretty thing,  
As sweet unto a Shepherd as a King,  
And sweeter too ;  
For Kings have cares that wait upon a Crown,  
And cares can make the sweetest Love to frowne ’ ?

Few follow Nash's quarrel with Harvey ; but who does not quote Nash's song—

‘ Spring, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant King,  
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,  
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pee-we, to-witta-woo ’ ?

Even Jonson's more excellent plays—*Everyman in his Humour*, in which Shakespeare played a part, *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, etc.—are far less memorable

to-day than the songs with which he interspersed them—

‘ Queen and huntress, chaste and fair ’ . . .

‘ Drink to me only with thine eyes ’ . . .

or the strophe in an ode—

‘ It is not growing like a tree  
In bulk, doth make men better be ’ . . .

or the epitaph on Mary Countess of Pembroke—

‘ Underneath this sable hearse  
Lies the subject of all verse,  
Sidney’s sister, Pembroke’s mother ’ . . .

Where shall quotation cease? The lyric poets multiplied in the land. There were divine poets who were mystics, like John Donne and Richard Crashaw, both dead before 1650. Dr. Johnson called them ‘ metaphysical ’, because they went to the hinterland of physics for the images in their poems. When we read, for instance, of old age, enduring

‘ His torrid zone at court, and calentures  
Of hot ambitions, irreligion’s ice,  
Zeal’s agues, and hydroptic avarice ’,

we recognize a species of wit embroidered with the colour of decay. ‘ Well may we laugh ’, cried the Duke of Normanby (1648-1721),

‘ Well may we laugh, but at the poet’s cost.  
That silly thing men call sheer wit avoid,  
With which our age so nauseously is cloy’d ’.

And posterity, though it should not laugh, may more respectfully pass by. But all Donne was not ‘ sheer wit ’. His exquisite style at its best has been matched in recent times by the packed thought of Mrs. Meynell’s lovely lyrics, just as the eloquence of Marlowe was aimed at in Stephen Phillips’s blank verse. For posterity sifts and selects, and we note that Palgrave,

in the *Golden Treasury*, preserves for everlasting delight one lyrical poem by Crashaw—

‘ Who e’er she be,  
That not impossible She  
That shall command my heart and me ’.

Bacon wrote poetry—

‘ The World’s a bubble, and the life of man  
Less than a span ’ ;

and Marlowe—

‘ Come live with me, and be my love ’ ;

and Sir Walter Raleigh, and even Queen Elizabeth. But chief of the vocal tribe who looked back to Ben Jonson as *choregus* was Robert Herrick (1591-1674), the Devonshire cleric, who saw a flower in every face and heard a bell in every flower. In deference to his calling as a clergyman, Herrick wrote divine poems in *Noble Numbers*. From love of his garden in the country he made his songs of the *Hesperides*, and from some strange malady of the age he wrote detestable epigrams. Every anthologist goes to Herrick ; and hardly less rich are the spoils of Richard Lovelace (1618-58), Abraham Cowley (1618-67), Sir John Suckling (1619-42), and many another. Together, their meed of English song is the true successor to Shakespeare. It is homogeneous, to use an ugly word for so rare and gossamer a fabric. Who could distinguish, for instance, the separate authorship of the following ?

- (1) ‘ There is a garden in her face  
Where roses and white lilies blow ’ . . . .
- (2) ‘ Sweet, be not proud of those two eyes  
Which starlike sparkle in the skies ’ . . . .
- (3) ‘ He that loves a rosy cheek,  
Or a coral lip admires,  
Or from starlike eyes doth seek  
Fuel to maintain his fires ’ . . . .

- (4) ' It is not beauty I demand,  
 A crystal brow, the moon's despair,  
 Nor the snow's daughter, a white hand,  
 Nor mermaid's yellow pride of hair'. . .

Yet (1) and (4) are by ' Anon ', a prolific songwriter of the age, (2) is by Herrick, and (3) by Thomas Carew (? 1594-1639).

Who, again, could confidently state a distinction in style and inspiration between Herrick's ' Bid me to weep, and I will weep ', and Lovelace's ' Stone walls do not a prison make ' ?

We cannot prolong this survey. There were poets of heroism and faëry, such as Michael Drayton (1563-1631), author of *Polyolbion*, *The Wars of the Barons*, and *Nymphidia*. There were sonneteers, such as Samuel Daniel ; musical metrists, such as Thomas Campion ; divine poets, with their exquisite conceits, such as Henry Vaughan, surnamed the Silurist, after the place of his birth in Wales, and George Herbert, author of *The Temple*. Above all, there were the songs in the plays : by George Chapman (1559-1634), who collaborated with Shakespeare, by Francis Beaumont (1584-1616) and John Fletcher (1579-1625), by John Marston (? 1575-1634), John Webster (? 1580-? 1625), Philip Massinger (1583-1640), John Ford, Thomas Dekker, and the rest. We must be content, in the presence of such plenty, merely to indicate the sources.

And in all this plenty, where was Milton ? Is it fanciful to think we hear his voice, pealing from Buckinghamshire to Devonshire, from the critic of the clergy in *Lycidas* to the Rev. Robert Herrick in *Hesperides*, or, at least, to the type he represented ?

' Blind mouths ! that scarce themselves know how to hold  
 A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least  
 That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs !  
 What reeks it them ? What need they ? They are sped,  
 And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs

Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw ;  
 The hungry sheep look up and are not fed,  
 But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,  
 Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread '.

If so, it was a harsh rebuke to the graceful ' shepherd ' of Dartmoor, who sang

' Of Brooks, of Blossoms, Birds, and Bowers,  
 Of April, May, of June, and July-flowers ' ;

who tuned his melodious lyre to Julia, Perilla, Perenna, Sylvia, Lucia, Electra, or, comprehensively, ' to his mistresses ', and who did not turn away from ' Amaryllis in the shade '.

The authentic note of seriousness and affairs is heard in a group of writers on theology, history, and politics whose works add up to a national total, though the separate items are of somewhat special interest. We could not do without Richard Hooker (c. 1554-1600), the gentle clergyman with a logic and a style, who wrote the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* ; or Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), who wrote *Leviathan* ; the *Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil*, and invented the doctrine of a social contract for the enhancement of political science ; or Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon (1608-74), who wrote a rejoinder to *Leviathan*, and an excellent *History of the Rebellion*, and who became, through his daughter, Anne, grandfather to two English Queens ; or Samuel Butler (1612-80), whose *Hudibras* lives in many a verse of stinging satire, aimed at the Puritans of his day and hitting the frailties of mankind ; or Joseph Hall (1574-1656), whose poetic *Satires* were burned by order of the Church, and who survived to adorn it as a bishop and a writer on the *Divine Right of Episcopacy* <sup>1</sup> ; or

<sup>1</sup> This book provoked a reply by a number of controversialists, whose *nom-de-plume*, Smectymnuus, was composed of the initial letters of their names. One of the M's stood for Milton.

Jeremy Taylor (1613-67), whose grave manuals on *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* still keep the fragrance of their appeal and the charm of their allusive utterance.

Even more intimate in sympathy are such books as the *Religio Medici*, written by a Norwich physician, Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82) with a delightful taste for odd rumination; the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621, a bedside book, as Thackeray called it, written by Robert Burton, and compounded of common sense and antiquarianism; the *Worthies of England*, 1662, by Thomas Fuller, antiquary and historian; and, above all, the *Compleat Angler*, 1653, by Izaak Walton, of which Andrew Lang, a later angler, says: 'The natural history is as fantastic as that of *Euphues*, the instruction on angling came from a mere fisher with bait, but the beauty of the style, the sweetness of the thought, keep the book fresh as with lavender and rosemary'.

We must pass by these delights. We pass, too, with scanty notice, the two poets, Edmund Waller (1606-87) and Andrew Marvell (1621-78), who succeeded more adroitly than Milton in steering a safe course in politics. Waller, to whom we may return in discussing Pope's predecessors in the revival of Chaucer's heroic couplet, wrote a poem 'Go, lovely Rose!' which seems to have strayed from the song-books of the Ronsardists—

' Go, lovely Rose,  
Tell her that wastes her time and me,  
That now she knows,  
When I resemble her to thee,  
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

' Tell her, that's young,  
And shuns to have her graces spied,  
That, hadst thou sprung  
In deserts, where no men abide,  
Thou must have uncommended died.



‘ Small is the worth  
Of beauty from the light retired ;  
Bid her come forth,  
Suffer herself to be desired,  
And not blush so to be admired.

‘ Then die ! that she  
The common fate of all things rare  
May read in thee,  
How small a part of time they share  
That are so wondrous sweet and fair ! ’

Waller’s wit served him to the end, and it is related that he told King Charles II, ‘ Poets, sire, succeed better in fiction than in truth ’, when that monarch rallied him on the inferiority of his Royal Ode to his Address to Cromwell. Andrew Marvell was Milton’s friend, and even helped him at the moment when the change from Commonwealth to Kingdom proved embarrassing to open partizans. His *Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland* is best remembered, perhaps, by its reference to ‘ the Royal actor ’, who

‘ Nothing common did or mean  
Upon that memorable scene ’.

More lovely are the stanzas of his *Thoughts in a Garden*—

‘ Annihilating all that’s made  
To a green thought in a green shade ’.

Nearest of all to Milton, though homelier and racier of the soil—the soil of Lydgate, Langland, and the allegorists—was John Bunyan (1628-88), author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, a book from which it is superfluous to make extracts. Less fortunate in his friendships than Milton, Bunyan’s dissent landed him in prison ; and, for more than twelve years, like another Boethius, he languished in Bedford gaol. The tinker’s son in prison, like Milton in his Secretary’s chair, was governed by a passion for purifying society

and restoring God's Kingdom on Earth. His dream of *Christian's Progress from this world to that which is to come*, with its vivid personification of abstract qualities and its direct description of imagined scenes, with its complete mastery of Scriptural language, and its unbroken appeal to young and old, has been one of the treasures of moral literature, almost in despite of learned critics, since its appearance in 1678. France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States, the lands, respectively, of the offspring of Huguenots, Lutherans, Protestants, and Puritans, welcomed *Pilgrim's Progress* with open arms, 'so that it is no mere poetical figure to say, as has been said, that it follows the Bible from land to land, as the singing of birds follows the dawn' <sup>1</sup>.

The Renaissance spread to

#### IV. SCANDINAVIA,

where a Danish poet, Anders Arrebo (1587-1627), translated the Psalms into verse, thus definitely ranging himself with the Ronsardists. His *Hexameron* (Six Days) was based on *La Semaine* of Du Bartas, and brought the modern epic to the far North. There they called him the 'Virgil of Trontheim', but Logau's epigram on Opitz proves that the title might be too easily earned. Still, Bishop Arrebo of Trontheim, who was relieved of his see in consequence of an over-keen participation in lay pleasures and sports, was a poet of genuine power in the van of the Norse revival. This, too, was the period of Bishop Brynjolf (1605-75), an Icelandic scholar of repute, whose name is for ever associated with the new age of Eddic romance; and a line is due to Thomas Kinjo (1634-1704), another Danish translator of the Psalms,

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. Raleigh, *Milton*.

whose buoyant and ringing sacred songs are still on the lips of his fellow-countrymen.

It is to

## V. THE NETHERLANDS,

however, the land of sea-dunes and sea-borders, and the equal of England and Spain in the spirit derived from the sea, that we turn, if not for Milton's peers, yet for currents of thought and modes of feeling not alien to the English epic poet. Renaissance and Reformation both sowed their precious seeds on Dutch soil, and only the broad vowels of the Dutch language and its limited usage at the present day obscure the effective talent of the greatest writers of Holland.

Hugo de Groot, known as Grotius (1583-1645), solved the linguistic problem by taking the short cut of Latin, which had served Erasmus so well. He holds a distinguished place among founders of international law by his treatises *de jure Prædæ*, 1603 (the MS. of which was not discovered till 1864) and *de jure Belli ac Pacis*, 1625. These are comparable in their special department to the pioneer work of a Malthus or a Darwin. More strictly germane to pure letters, though still Latin in its language, was Grotius' sacred drama, based on *Genesis* i, and entitled *Adamus Exsul* (Adam in Exile), 1601. Latin Biblical plays (indeed, Biblical plays in any language) were written in plenty in those times. But this drama differs from others by the use which Milton made of it when he was planning a play or an epic poem (he hesitated between the two) on the subject of the Fall of Man. He owed more to Grotius than to Du Bartas, despite the high favour of *La Semaine* in Huguenot and Protestant circles. Another important work by the Dutch jurispudent and playwright was a Latin history of the revolt of the Netherlands. It derives particular interest from the author's

personal experience. Alike in Holland as elsewhere, patriotic scholarship paid its toll to religious strife, and Grotius spent three years (1619-22) in prison, escaping at last, with his wife's devoted aids, in an empty case which a friend had sent him full of books. He first took refuge in France, and was next despatched to Stockholm as Ambassador to Queen Christina of Sweden; and his brilliant, chequered career was closed by death in shipwreck.

The friend who contrived his escape was Gerard Jan Voss, known as Vossius (1577-1649). Voss was a great scholar on his own account, with a fine record of academic appointments at Leyden, Amsterdam, and Cambridge, and he was Canon of Canterbury in 1629—so closely did Holland and England move in the Protestant plane. Voss is well described as *polyhistor*. His erudition covered a wide range, and the world of learning is still indebted to him for his *Aristarchus*, four volumes on philology, 1635, and for nine books on good and bad Latinity, 1645 and 1685. He left a son fashioned in his own likeness, Isaac Vossius (1618-89). Isaac taught history in Amsterdam at the juvenile age of fifteen. He became tutor in Greek to Queen Christina. He joined the Anglican Church, and received a prebend's stall at Windsor.

Peace to their learned ashes! We cannot linger with the dead Latinists of yesterday. Among them was Janus Gruter (1560-1627), English on his mother's side and by education at Norwich and Cambridge. He was Palatine librarian at Heidelberg when that fortress fell to the Bavarians, and most of his treasures went to Rome. In his later years of retirement Gruter edited Livy's history into chapters, and he issued four volumes of select passages (*Delitiæ*, 'Delights') from the works of the Latin Humanists of Italy, France, Germany, and Belgium, for which we are deeply in his debt. Another Latinist, French by

birth but Dutch by adoption, was Salmasius (Claude de Saumaise, 1588-1653). He was professor of history at Leyden (1631), in succession, after an interval, to Scaliger. King Charles II of England in his exile commissioned Salmasius to write a vindication of the memory of Charles I, for the instruction of opinion in Europe. This took shape as the *Defensio regia pro Carolo I*, 1649, and Milton replied to it, 1651, in his *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*. Alas, that the fate of kings should have bent such spirits to politics ! Salmasius, like other tired students, sought rest at the end in Stockholm.

There we may follow him for a moment. Queen Christina's Court at Stockholm had a place in the republic of letters independent of Sweden's place in the shattered comity of nations. The Queen herself was a remarkable woman. Born in 1626, the daughter of King Gustavus Adolphus, she acceded at the early age of six. Twenty-two years afterwards she abdicated, quite voluntarily and spontaneously, and entered the Church of Rome, deeming Stockholm not worth a mass. Christina's policy does not concern us, though she played a part among the treaty-makers at Westphalia ; but her brief and illustrious career at the head of a court of northern culture is at once interesting and important. Unlike some others, the Swedish Court owed its culture almost solely to the Sovereign, and disused it, as a fact, at her departure. The Queen's unrivalled gift of conversation, her impulsive and large-hearted hospitality, her incorporation in female form of the courage and daring of the Vasa dynasty, combined to attract to Stockholm men of light and leading from all countries, and especially, as we have seen, from Protestant countries in political turmoil. The name of Athens of the North is not inappropriate to her capital at this epoch. It was not merely a place of call or of refuge ; it was a

home and focus for scholars from all parts ; and a renewed radiance of youthful spirits seemed to emanate from the Queen's personality. She even taught philosophers to dance. Thus, Descartes, for example, a leader of the French School of Reason, was allured by the lights of Stockholm, and was induced by Christina to vary his philosophic teaching with a Court-ballet, *la Naissance de la Paix* ; and the Swedish philosopher, Jorge Sternhjelm (1598-1672), known as the father of Swedish poetry, wrote masques and plays to entertain his sovereign. Christina lived to the end of the seventeenth century, but her masculine mind and unconventional manners were not well liked at the Papal Court, to which she retired after her abdication.

We return from these northern lights to the signs of the Renaissance in Holland.

Merry, busy Amsterdam was at this time a thriving trade-centre, looking across to the New World from the Old, and its stout, comfortable society relaxed upon art and letters. The cobwebs were swept by fresh breezes out of the old Dutch Chambers of Rhetoric. Thus, in 1600, or thereabouts, the *Oude Kamer* <sup>1</sup> of the Eglantine was the scene of a parlour-revolution. We are to figure a fine old merchant, Roemer Visscher (1547-1620) by name, seeking to lead the Eglantine into a lighter and more expansive activity. In 1617 the revolting dramatists marched out, with their banners flying the French colours, and founded 'the first Dutch Academy', called the Coster Academy after Dr. Samuel Coster, its new chief. The Dutch Renaissance led by Roemer Visscher was not solely a men's affair. Coster's most powerful colleague, it is not fanciful to say, was Visscher's second daughter, Tesselschade (1594-1649). Every Dutchman of letters at this date was in love or

<sup>1</sup> See p. 131 above.



had been in love with her, so that sober historians admit that

‘It is surprising to what an extent the subtle influence and personality of these two sisters, and especially of the younger, pervades the whole history of the great age of Dutch literature’<sup>1</sup>.

We like to think of the comely daughter of the substantial merchant of Amsterdam flirting in sweet Dutch madrigals with the leading scholars of her native country, and helping their difficult transition from Latin learning to French wit.

Tesselschade’s lovers chiefly gathered at the *Muiderkring*, at Muiden Castle on the Zuyder Zee, for forty years (1609-48) the official residence of Governor Pieter Cornelis Hooft (1581-1648). Hooft wrote histories and poems. His ‘History of the Netherlands’ earned him the title of the Tacitus of Holland, and he is said to have prepared for his task by reading Tacitus fifty-two times through. By his plays and poems and sonnets he is the Dutch Ronsard or Edmund Spenser. These acclimatized the French Renaissance in Holland, and are the pure fruits of Petrarchism and the Pleiad. But even more than his histories and poems, Hooft’s hospitality at the Castle and his genuine love of cultivated talk added lustre to Holland’s golden age, and his name is among the most famous in the country which he loved and served.

Another of Tesselschade’s suitors was a shoemaker’s son by birth, Gerbrand Adrianszon Bredero (1585-1618). He went to Spanish models for his romantic dramas, but his gifts were most effectively displayed in short, popular songs, which recall the Dutch interiors of his fellow-artists in the same epoch. Bredero edited in 1615 an *Apollo of Ghesang der Musen*,

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. iv.

which was a kind of 'Tottel's Miscellany' of the Netherlands, and he showed forth in his short life such ample promise for the future that it is pleasant to record the national festival held in his honour on the occasion of his tercentenary, 1885.

Constantine Huyghens (1596-1687) belonged, too, to the Muiden circle. He was a diplomatist by calling and received the reward of an English knighthood, and his son Christian (1629-93) became a mathematician of world-wide fame. But to Tesselschade Visscher Huyghens was known as a French, Latin, and Dutch lyrist, who composed music as readily as poetry. He effected elegant translations from Guarini, Donne, and the Spanish aphorists, thus immensely enhancing the reputation of Hooft's *séances* at the Castle.

Of Jacob Cats (1577-1660), 'Father Cats', as they called him, a kind of Hans Sachs of the Netherlands; of Theodore Rodenburg (c. 1580-1644), his precise antitype, who assumed in homely Amsterdam the airs of a Spanish grandee; of Geraert Brandt (1626-85), who wrote Hooft's funeral oration; of Andries Pels, the self-styled Boileau of the North, and of the rest of the leaders and followers associated with Coster's secession, we must be content merely to mention the names. We come to a greater than these in the person of Joost von den Vondel (1587-1679), the admitted poet laureate of Amsterdam, second only, if second, to Grotius in the roll of Dutch men of letters. Vondel, a hosier's son, was brought up to his father's business, but left it in early manhood to his wife, and, later, to the management of a son, who, unfortunately, defaulted. He employed his leisure to learn the languages necessary to a Dutchman who wished to pluck Renaissance fruits, and he brought to his gardener's task an intense and ardent imagination, a real genius for friendship, and a natural delight in flowers, children, and rural life.

Vondel began as translator ; how else should anyone begin who sought to import foreign culture to the Netherlands ? Unluckily, the turmoil of politics turned his attention to satire, and a Latin poem on the doctrine of the damnation of unbaptized infants (*Decretum horribile*, as he called it) is typical of the kind. But Vondel was too true a poet not to wish to interpret what he saw, and to appeal to the hearts of his contemporaries by a method less crude than the invective. So he turned, like others, to drama, and was invited in 1637 to write the inaugural play for the Eglantine, now weaned from its cradle of revolt. He chose the tale of the fall of Troy, which he adapted to the circumstances of Amsterdam. Vondel's lyrical gifts were always greater than his dramatic, and this play was adorned with choric songs which pointed the meaning of the action. Another feature of interest in the drama was its deepening tone of Catholic sympathy, suspicious at the time to the Protestants, and confirmed a few years later by Vondel's conversion to Rome.

A long series of plays on sacred subjects followed the Academy piece. Few care to read them to-day. The curious, stilted effect of stretching a Mystery-play on the bed of Greek tragic drama repels rather than attracts, and it is not easy to prove out of the theatre the place occupied by Vondel in the Dutch capital in his day. But what cannot be proved may be imagined ; and imagination more readily conceives the instant appeal of these plays, cast in Renaissance moulds, but written in the Dutch language, breaking, like birds, into Dutch song, and treating with classical dignity the old, familiar Bible themes, to a people filled with homely piety and urgently practising the new wit. They assimilated all the critics' rules, even swallowing whole the dramatic Unities.

The most famous drama in the series, which

included *Jephtha*, *Joseph*, *David*, *Solomon*, and others, was the *Lucifer* of 1654. Its fame is derived from several causes. The hero's comparative freedom from set circumstances and traditions gave Vondel a wider license to invent new characters and situations ; and such recent political events as Prince Maurice's action against Barneveldt and Cromwell's usurpation in England lent a present appeal of direct sympathy to the old tale of angels' revolt and of mutinous pride in heaven. The choric songs of the angelic choir gave a splendid opportunity to the lyrist, and Vondel surpassed his own record in the bold lines of his characterization of Beelzebub, Belial, Raphael, Michael, and, above all, Lucifer himself.

The comparison with Milton is inevitable. The Dutch play, unlike the English epic, did not admit the introduction of the Lord of Heaven in person. To that extent Vondel was at a disadvantage ; but his work has a tenderness and a humanity which Milton's sublimity rarely reached. His piety was the old Roman *pietas*, which was dutifulness and pity as well ; and, apart from the limits of his material and from the rigidities of his rules, Vondel has a high place in the Renaissance as well as in the too short roll of inspired men of letters in Holland.

So our survey brings us back to

## VI. MILTON.

Remote though his genius was from the idler singers of his day, he was not alone in his generation. He shared with Du Bartas of the Pleiad, with Hooft and Vondel in the Netherlands, with Bishop Arrebo in Iceland, and with many a minor poet, busy at translating the Psalms, or content merely to die for them, the common aim of Huguenots and Protestants in all countries touched by reform : to heal on the plains of literature the scars of religious warfare, and to restore

the Reformation from its usurpers to its rightful place in the heritage of the Renaissance.

For, if 'the German Renaissance was the Reformation', as we read in an earlier chapter, this was not the whole of the matter. In the long evolution of the modern mind, since Petrarch directed it to Cicero, the various sources of inspiration have been indistinguishably merged. Mental analysts, like Matthew Arnold, who discovered Athens in our consciousness and Jerusalem in our conscience, are employing mere figures of speech. No test known to psychology can yield results so precise. The mind of modern Europe is the deposit of a confluence of forces. Physical discovery is one, the romance of the Navigators and planters. Intellectual discovery is another, the romance of the Humanists and grammarians. The art of the Pagan Classics, the morality of the Hebrew Bible, Mirandola's moonlit nights at Florence, Reuchlin's traffic with the Jews' sacred books: all these forces, interacting on medieval allegory and legend, flowed down the stream of culture and through the straits of the Renaissance.

We may note here a further aspect. A part of the German contribution was the inclusion of Hebrew grammar in the curriculum of the Humanists. The first German anti-Semites were the anti-Humanists of Cologne, whom Pfefferkorn persuaded to advise the destruction of Hebrew books. But when Reuchlin and von Hutten had done their work, and the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* had helped to win the battle of the Hebrew books <sup>1</sup>, the tributary flowed on into the main stream. The Hebraists, Puritan or Huguenot, were Hellenists and Latinists too. They composed their Biblical plays as obediently to Horace and Aristotle (expounded by Italian and French commentators) as any Spaniard dramatizing a *punc-*

<sup>1</sup> See p. 153 above.



*tilio*. They wrote their poems on the Fall or the Redemption with the same care for the conventions of the epic as du Bellay had urged upon the Pleiad. The result was sometimes grotesque, more often heavy and mechanical, very seldom supremely great. But the fact most clearly to be emphasized is the junction of the streams. As far as the literary Renaissance consists in a fulfilment of the aims of the earlier Humanists in Europe, as far, that is to say, as it took shape in an infusion of the classical spirit into modern languages and style, so far the Northern Renaissance was as complete as the Southern, and Reformation and Renaissance are at one.

This fact is chiefly important in considering Milton's succession and his place in European literature. Milton, no less than Ariosto, was a direct son of the Renaissance. It was merely an accident of temperament that the one chose a Biblical theme and the other a Carolingian; so much an accident, in fact, that Milton himself was in two minds whether to write on Lucifer or King Arthur. He had jotted down ninety-eight subjects before he settled on the story of the Fall. He was equally in doubt whether to write it as an epic or a drama: Du Bartas had selected the one, and Vondel the other; and Milton's final decision in both instances was a concession to Puritan instincts, not a departure from classical tradition. Indeed, striking evidence is afforded to the predominantly classical bias of the mind of the greatest Hebraist among English poets by Milton's preface to *Paradise Lost*. Speaking of the verse, he tells us—

‘The measure is heroic English verse without rime, as that of Homer in Greek and of Virgil in Latin—rime being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age’.



He goes on to speak of rhyme as ‘a fault avoided by the learned ancients’, and of blank verse as an ‘ancient liberty recovered to an heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of riming’. Thus, in the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, which was raging simultaneously across the Channel, Milton would definitely have allied himself with the champions of the ancients. But would they have allied themselves with him? The curious perverseness of experts cannot be better illustrated than by a discussion which arose out of a Carolingian epic, *Clovis*, published in 1657 by a French poet, Jean de St. Sorlin. The Classicists (*pro-ancients*) attacked it on the ground that none but a classical hero should be the subject of heroic verse, and, in the very year of Milton’s death, Boileau, most ardent of the Classicists, went so far as to maintain that Satan himself, since he lacked the credentials of a Homeric or Virgilian introduction, was not entitled to the *entrée* of epic poetry. So much stricter was the theory of the critics than the poet’s practice in *Paradise Lost*. We shall see in the centuries of Reason the good and evil of this quarrel. Here we refer to it by anticipation in order to prove that the Renaissance transgressed the limits laid down by the ordnance-survey of Parnassus.

There are places, as on a river-surface, where we can trace the currents in Milton’s stream, recognizable even in their fusion—

‘Meanwhile, our primitive great Sire, to meet  
His godlike guest, walks forth, without more train  
Accompanied than with his own complete  
Perfections; in himself was all his state,  
More solemn than the tedious pomp that waits  
On princes, when their rich retinue long  
Of horses led and grooms besmeared with gold  
Dazzles the crowd and sets them all agape.

. . . So to the sylvan lodge  
They came, that like Pomona’s arbour smiled,  
With flowerets decked and fragrant smells. But Eve,  
Undecked, save with herself, more lovely fair

Than wood-nymph, or the fairest goddess feigned  
 Of three that in Mount Ida naked strove,  
 Stood to entertain her guest from Heaven ; no veil  
 She needed, virtue-proof ; no thought infirm  
 Altered her cheek.

. . . So down they sat,  
 And to their viands fell ; not seemingly  
 The Angel, nor in mist—the common gloss  
 Of theologians—but with keen dispatch  
 Of real hunger, and concoctive heat  
 To transubstantiate : what redounds transpires  
 Through spirits with ease ; nor wonder, if by fire  
 Of sooty coal the empiric alchemist  
 Can turn, or holds it possible to turn,  
 Metals of drossiest ore to perfect gold,  
 As from the mine. Meanwhile at table Eve  
 Ministered naked, and their flowing cups  
 With pleasant liquors crowned. O innocence  
 Deserving Paradise ! If ever, then,  
 Then had the Sons of God excuse to have been  
 Enamoured at that sight. But in those hearts  
 Love unlibidinous reigned, nor jealousy  
 Was understood, the injured lover's hell'.

—*Paradise Lost*, V, 350-57, 377-85, 433-50.

In these thirty-five lines from Book V, as in the choric songs of Vondel's plays, we mark the efforts of the poet to transpose, not quite successfully, the key of the Biblical narrative, and to attune it to that of a Carolingian or an Arthurian epic poem as rendered by Italian Virgil-votaries. The heroines of Boiardo and Ariosto had enthralled the senses of man ; naked Eve enthralled super-sensibly. Romantic heroes (not excluding Gargantua) had proved themselves excellent trenchermen ; angels, too, should feast in the public eye, not 'in mist, the common gloss of theologians'. Poets of chivalry had filled their pages with gorgeous processional descriptions ; the poet of celestial knights invented a retinue of one, who outshone all the rest. And, in order to visualize the successor to the love-sick maidens of medieval legend, Milton, too, had recourse to Pagan myth, and called Eve lovelier than the goddesses who were judged by Paris on Mount Ida. Can it be said that the cross-currents are not visible ?

Accordingly, we are not to be misled by the theme

of *Paradise Lost* into regarding Milton as a divine poet after the pattern of the allegorists of old. He sang the chivalry of heaven. His was pre-eminently the voice of the liberation of the spirit of man, in the form taken by the Renaissance when Reuchlin and Colet had recrossed the Alps. Milton is the poet of Luther's Renaissance ; such a poet as the Reformation might have produced in the country of its origin, if the ambition of jealous princes and the Spanish pride of the Emperor Charles V had not turned that beneficent movement into hideous ways of civil war.

The wonder is, that he did not fall between irreconcilable realities. Like so many of his contemporaries in Holland, Milton was deeply implicated in the public happenings of his day. He accompanied Cromwell's progress as Latin Secretary to the government of the Protectorate, and yet he escaped execution when the Stuart monarchy was restored. He owed something to his constant friend, Andrew Marvell, whose verses (signed A. M.) are prefixed for all time to *Paradise Lost* ; something, too, he owed to his poetry, and most, perhaps, to his misfortunes. The merciful view became men better, because Milton was broken and blind ; broken in the service of his country, and blind by excess of toil. So they left him to his secretaries and daughters, and to his ninety-eight plans of a great poem, to be resumed after nearly thirty years of active political campaigning. *No Blind Guides!* they wrote, with pointed personal malice, when King Charles II was marching through London and Milton hid himself in the country. And the blind man's magnificent response came all the more finely out of solitude—

‘ Not to me returns

Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,  
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,  
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine ;  
But cloud instead and ever-during dark

Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men  
 Cut off, and, for the book of knowledge fair  
 Presented with a universal blank  
 Of Nature's works, to me expunged and rased,  
 And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.  
 So much the rather thou, Celestial Light,  
 Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers  
 Irradiate ; there plant eyes ; all mist from thence  
 Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell  
 Of things invisible to mortal sight '.

—*Paradise Lost*, III, 41-51.

We have met in these pages great writers who worked under harsh conditions : Dante, whose life was spent in exile ; Petrarch, who would have sold his ease for a common Greek-Italian dictionary ; Rabelais, whom persecution dogged ; Ponce de Leon, in a dungeon of the Inquisition ; Tasso, in a mad-house at Ferrara ; Grotius, who escaped in an empty book-chest. The fate of none is quite comparable with Milton's. He spent his manhood and strength in faithful labour for the Commonwealth ; and when all his hopes were disappointed, and his colleagues were scattered or dead,

' On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues,  
 In darkness, and with dangers compassed round ',

he returned with undiminished ardour to the high poetic tasks which had occupied him in youth.

Milton's epics (*Paradise Lost*, twelve books, 1667 ; *Paradise Regained*, four books, 1671) are the grandest single draft of poetry which the tide of the Renaissance brought to Europe. Merely as a story, they enthrall. Virgil had visited Hell in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*. Dante, with Virgil as guide, had revisited it in the *Divina Commedia*. Du Bartas narrated the Creation. Vondel dramatized Lucifer's pride. Milton, more boldly daring, enlarged the map of Infinitude. By the inward light which consumed him he imagined Heaven in council and the wars of the Archangels ; Chaos, through which the rebels fell ; Hell, at the

bottom of Chaos ; the league of the Fiends in Hell ;  
and their infernal conspiracy—

‘ to confound the race  
Of mankind in one root, and Earth with Hell  
To mingle and involve, done all to spite  
The great Creator ’.

—*Paradise Lost*, II, 382-5.

Out of Heaven, sheer into Chaos, he suspended the  
New World of man, representing it as the Happy  
Isle, into which, in execution of his design, Satan  
‘ brought death ’

‘ and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us and regain the blissful seat ’.

—*Paradise Lost*, I, 3-5.

And *Paradise Regained* fulfilled this promise of the  
opening lines of *Paradise Lost*.

To his sacred epics Milton added a sacred play,  
the *Samson Agonistes* of 1671. In the tragedy of the  
blind captive,

‘ O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon ’,

we hear the accents of the poet’s despair—

‘ Promise was that I  
Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver !  
Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him  
Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves,  
Himself in bands under Philistian yoke ’.

And likewise of the poet’s recovery—

‘ But he, though blind of sight,  
Despised, and thought extinguished quite,  
With inward eyes illuminated,  
His fiery virtue roused  
From under ashes into sudden flame ’.

The Miltonic theology and astronomy are not  
acceptable to-day ; nor are the Aeschylean, for that  
matter. But the further our intellect recedes from  
the Ptolemaic universe and the Puritan hell, the more  
freely we travel in imagination through the spaces of  
Milton’s compass ; the more freely, too, we consort

with the creatures of his superb characterization. For, when the long day's work was done and night had descended prematurely, Milton's second style surpassed his first. The elegiac note of *Lycidas* is not unmatched in Italian poetry; the masque of *Comus* is not beyond compare; but the poems of the second period resemble, in the words of a recent writer, 'the achievement of Napoleon when he was winning the victories that changed the map of Europe' <sup>1</sup>. So might his countrymen say of him, as Manoa said of Samson dead—

' Samson hath quit himself  
Like Samson, and heroically hath finished  
A life heroic, on his enemies  
Fully revenged'.

Milton's death, closely followed by Calderon's <sup>2</sup>, marks the end of the age of Romance. Before considering the new age of Reason, already mewing its mighty youth in France, we shall conclude our survey of the Renaissance with a brief note on the transition. It happened in France in this epoch that social and intellectual conditions conspired to render French criticism a real force in the dictation of public taste; and, so far as the course of the Renaissance was diverted from the channels of Romance, it was French critics who wrote the *finis*.

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. Raleigh, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> 1674, 1681.



## CHAPTER X.

### I. The Watershed of 1637.

BUT there is no *finis* in literature. In the continuous history of art and letters there are no loose ends or loose beginnings. Production admits no finality, and the categories invented by critics for the classification of books neither bind nor regulate their writers. Already in 1637, when Milton wrote *Lycidas* at Horton, the French Academy was founded in Paris and Corneille produced his *Cid*. Already Malherbe had arrived (1555-1628), causing Boileau, law-giver to Parnassus, to inscribe his 'Enfin Malherbe vint' on the portal of classical French poetry. For this distinction between classical and romantic belongs to the critics, not the poets. It is true that there was no one in England, not even the poor figure of a Gabriel Harvey, to say with authority to Milton: 'Your *Lycidas* has some features of classic elegy, but the references to religion must be taken out', as Cardinal Richelieu, with the French Academy behind him, said to Corneille in the same year, 'Your *Cid* has some features of classic drama, but it must observe the Unity of Place', and imposed the critic's will upon the poet. It is true, then, that there was a difference of atmosphere in France and England at this epoch, and that French writers differed from English in their more tranquil submission to critics' laws; not, at first, for the sake of the laws, but for the sake of law itself. It was good to have authority to appeal to; good to constrain

individual taste to conform to general consent, and to check eccentricities and vagaries by accepted precedents and standards. After bitter experience of civil war, alike in arms and in opinions, great Frenchmen in all departments of thought were seeking a foothold of conduct and foundations of belief. They changed spontaneity for obedience; for the law of love they substituted the love of law; and this choice imposed its new conventions on painting, architecture, letters, and even on minor arts like landscape-gardening.

Here our present survey pauses. The literature of Europe is so rich because it assimilates and combines the forms of classical style with the matters of romantic tradition. There were epochs when one or other element was more or less in the ascendant. From the twelfth century to the end of the sixteenth, not without certain rhetorical diversions, the romantic manner prevailed. In the seventeenth century came a change of outlook. By the weight of the French leaders of the *grand siècle* classical conventions were imposed on the literature of a hundred and fifty years. We shall see the signs in the rise of the French Academy, almost at the outset of the epoch, and of the English Royal Society in 1660, with its insistence on

‘ a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions; clear senses; a native casiness; bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness as they can ’<sup>1</sup>.

We shall mark them in a new approach to nature, a new method of art in that approach. A safe way was sought by philosophy during the centuries of

<sup>1</sup> Written by Bishop Sprat (1635-1713), a founder and the first historian of the Royal Society.

‘Bon sens’, or Commonsense, out of lawless curiosity and the wild sweetness of Romance. We shall follow that way in the next volume. We shall follow its eloquent course through the French looking-glass land, where ‘rien n’est beau que le vrai’, and all truth had been told by the Ancients, to the earthquake of the French Revolution and the reaction to the romantic point of view.

## II. CONCLUSION.

Meanwhile we may close the present volume with a definition and a warning.

What is this Romance, after all, with which we have been occupied so continuously? Originally, the term is philological: learned clerks spoke *lingua Latina*, the High Latin of the Church; the lay (or lewd) orders of society spoke *lingua Romana*, or Low Latin, and, as a token of clerkly contempt, the epithet *rustica* was attached to their speech. But the laymen were avenged on the clerks. The Latin languages of modern Europe, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and the Norman element in English, unfolded from *lingua Romana*, and the Low Latin *romanice*, or *romance*, became the basis of the current Romance-languages.

So much Romance owed to ancient Rome. Its romantic quality, however, was derived, not from Rome, but from native sources. The term passed out of philology into literature, and was extended from the spoken language to books written in *romance*. Romance is not romantic because French laymen talked *lingua Romana*. It then first became romantic when French *romans* in verse or prose were written in dialects of that tongue; and the elements of love and adventure, now inseparable from the word, were drawn from the themes and treatment ‘romanced’ (*i.e.*, translated into *romance*) in story and song.

We need not renumerate those themes: the Charlemagne-cycle, the Arthuriad, Antiquity, and kindred and local matters. We discussed them in Chapter I above, where we saw that, from start to finish, the *roman*-writer, or romancer, was steeped in the tradition of feudal chivalry. The knight, or gentleman, of Europe was a romantic invention from the first. He made love by romancers' rules, he defended romantic points of honour, he died a romantic death. Even heroes of classical origin were ground in the romancer's mill. So Alexander went crusading, so Troilus loved Criseyde, so King Lion parodied Charlemagne. Even books written in the classic tongue conformed to the romantic convention. The pure Latin of More's *Utopia* cannot cloak the romantic descent of the man who first sailed Westward ho ! nor disguise the texture of the sentiments which he had ' customably in his mouth '—

‘ He that hath no grave is covered with the sky ’.

‘ The way to Heaven out of all places is of like length and distance ’.

This is romantic, not classical, speech. It is the same language as was spoken by the Knights in the old *romans*; the same as was used by Sir Richard Grenville in Raleigh's narrative of the *Revenge*: ‘ not to shorten the honour of their nation by prolonging their own lives for a few hours ’; the same as Robert Scott spoke in our day (1912) when he measured out of the Antarctic his lonely road to heaven. More wrote in the Latin tongue with classical taste and correctness, but he uttered the romantic creed of the mariners of Antwerp and Plymouth, who spoke no language but their own. Even anti-romance, too, served the cause of the romantic convention. Cervantes, making chivalry modern, invented the greatest gentleman of all, to whom

‘ It seemed very requisite and behooveful, as well for the augmentation of his honour as for the benefit of the Commonwealth, that he himself should become a knight-errant, and go throughout the world with his horse and armour, to seek adventures, and practise in person all that he had read was used by knights of old ’.

Quixote’s author justified the romancers, from the first *romans* of Bretagne to the romantic epos of Ariosto and Spenser, the romantic discipline of Castiglione, the romantic theatre of Shakespeare, Milton’s poems, and Calderon’s plays. He added Colonel Newcome and Mr. Pickwick to the roll of gentle exemplars, and he caused Tennyson’s Victorian verses to ring true to Renaissance idealism—

‘ To reverence the King, as if he were  
Their conscience, and their conscience as the King,  
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,  
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,  
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,  
To honour his own word as if his God’s,  
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity ’.

And, lastly, the warning. We give it in Walter Pater’s words, to no period so appropriate as to the seventeenth century, when worldly eyes were turning away from the enchantments of Romance to the safeguards of Reason—

‘ To discriminate schools of art, of literature, is, of course, part of the obvious business of literary criticism : but, in the work of literary production, it is easy to be overmuch occupied concerning them. For, in truth, the legitimate contention is, not of one age or school of literary art against another, but of all successive schools alike against the stupidity which is dead to the substance, and the vulgarity which is dead to form ’ <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> ‘ Postscript ’ to *Appreciations*.





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